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# MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ,

HER

# CORRESPONDENTS AND CONTEMPORARIES.

Sevigné

MARIE DE RABUTIN CHANTAL

MARQUISE DE | SÉVIGNÉ

(at the age of 25.)

# MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ,

HER

# CORRESPONDENTS AND CONTEMPORARIES.

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BY

THE COMTESSE DE PULIGA.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

B. 2764.

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TO MY FATHER

this Work

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# PREFACE.

BEFORE committing the following pages to the attention of the reader, a few words are due from the writer to say that no pretence is made to bring forward any new facts in connection with the life of Madame de Sévigné.

The chief aims in this labour of love have been to show Madame de Sévigné, perhaps more than has yet been done, as a woman and as a philosopher; to enter with the reader not only into the subject, but into the spirit of her letters—pausing at each noble thought to see if some instruction cannot be derived from it; to make her loved as well as admired; to paint her brilliant youth in that polished court of Anne of Austria; to show her a Frondeuse with a pure fame; to sympathize with the woes of her short married life; to see her weep over the unworthy husband she loved but could not esteem; to respect her when, a fond mother, she seeks retirement to devote herself to her two children—to that son and that daughter, 'the dear sorrow of her life;' to look on while such men as Fouquet, as Conti, as Turenne

are rejected as lovers but retained as friends; to listen to the insidious Bussy endeavouring in vain to shake her virtue and forced to acknowledge it; to accompany her uninvited to the Hôtel de Rambouillet, where she sits one of that fair circle listening with an indulgent smile to the tender sighs of Ménage; to witness her, a beauty still, the mother of another triumphant beauty; to follow her year by year, not only in Paris, but to Livry and the Rochers; and at each of those places to group around her the many friends who were true to her through that eventful life. Finally, to perform with her that last long and tedious journey to Grignan, there to admire her fear and courage before death (it seems to us there can be no courage where there is no fear); and to see her pass away in the house of that daughter who had been her very all; perhaps also to enter with a full heart into the feelings of love and sorrow which after her bereavement Madame de Grignan so ably expressed.

If we have succeeded in picturing that smiling image of womanhood in her living and true shape, and if from the hearts of a few who knew her not before we can call forth that sympathy and admiration we feel for Madame de Sévigné, then is our task accomplished and we are rewarded for our endeavour to render our efforts acceptable.

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# MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ,

HER

# CORRESPONDENTS AND CONTEMPORARIES.

## CHAPTER I.

Descriptive portrait of Madame de Sévigné, by Madame de la Fayette.—Character and genius of Madame de Sévigné.

As in the Greek drama of old the chorus advanced to the front of the stage to sing the praises of the heroes for whom the interest of the audience was desired, so we, likening the contemporaries of Madame de Sévigné to that chorus, imagine there can be no better way of introducing her to the reader than to reproduce what was written of her and read with approval during her lifetime. Excelling as they did in the delineation of character, the polite and literary world of the period now to occupy us were singularly fond of painting in words what was emphatically termed a 'portrait' of anyone regarded as possessing some superiority.

In accordance with this custom, Madame de la Fayette, the intimate friend of Madame de Sévigné, penned the following 'portrait,' which she circulated

among their acquaintances under the masculine signature of '*un Inconnu*':—

'Those who attempt to portray the fair are ever striving to flatter, that they may give pleasure, never daring to utter one syllable as to defects; but being as I am, unknown to you, madame, I will paint you with a bold hand, and make known the truth without fear of incurring your resentment.

'I am grieved at having nothing but what is agreeable to tell you, for it would be a great pleasure to me if, after having pointed to a thousand defects, I could see myself this winter received by you in the same manner as many persons who have all their lives importuned you with praises.

'It is not my wish to overwhelm you with praise, nor to trifle time away by saying that your figure is perfect, that your complexion has a bloom and freshness which assures us you are but twenty; that your mouth, your teeth, and your hair are unrivalled;—no, I will not tell you all this, your mirror alone is sufficient. But as you do not waste time by consulting it, it cannot tell you how charming you are when you speak; and this is what I must reveal to you.

'Know then, madame, if perchance you know it not already, that your mind so greatly adorns and beautifies your person, that when you are animated by conversation from which restraint is banished, there is nothing on earth so pleasing. All you utter has such a charm, and becomes you so well, that your words

attract around you "the loves and the graces;" the brilliancy of your wit imparts such lustre to your expression, that though it appears that wit ought only to affect the ears, it is certain that yours dazzles the eyes; so much so that when you are listened to it is impossible any longer to remark that your features lack regularity, and we award you the most complete beauty in the world.

'You can conjecture that if I am unknown to you, you are not unknown to me, and that I must have had more than once the honour of seeing and hearing you to be able thus to distinguish where lies the charm which surprises mankind. But I wish further to let you see, madame, that I am as well acquainted with your solid qualifications as with those which are agreeable and attractive. Your mind is great, noble, adapted to dispense wealth and incapable of stooping to the care of hoarding it: you are susceptible to fame and ambition, and no less so to pleasures—you seem to be born for them, and they appear to have been created for you: your presence adds to diversion, and diversions enhance your beauty. In short, joy is the natural state of your soul, and sorrow is more unnatural in you than in any other. You are by nature tender and affectionate, but to the shame of our sex this tenderness has been useless to you, and you have confined it to your own, bestowing it upon Madame de la Fayette.

'Ah, madame, if there were in the world one so

fortunate that you should think him not unworthy of the treasure she enjoys, and he did not strive by every means in his power to win it, he would deserve to suffer all the misfortunes which love can inflict on those who live under its sway. What happiness to obtain possession of a heart such as yours, the sentiments of which would be expressed in that refined wit with which the gods have endowed you! Your heart, madame, is doubtless a treasure that none can ever deserve: never was there one so generous and so faithful. There are people who suspect you of not always showing it as it is; but, on the contrary, you are so accustomed to feel nothing but what is honourable, that you sometimes allow to be seen what prudence would require you to hide. You are the most courteous and obliging person ever known, and by a manner at once free and gentle, which is apparent in all your actions, the simplest compliments of good breeding appear in you as protestations of friendship, and all who leave your presence remain persuaded of your esteem and good will, without being able to explain to themselves what mark you have given them of either.

'In fine, Heaven has endowed you with charms such as were never given to another, and the world is under an obligation to you for having manifested so many admirable qualities which were before unknown. I will not undertake to describe them; I should be breaking the resolution I formed—not to

overwhelm you with praise. Moreover, madame, to say of you what would be

> Dignes de vous et dignes de paraître,
> Il faudrait être votre amant,
> Et je n'ai pas l'honneur de l'être.'*

Of such praise, at the age of three and thirty, did Madame de Sévigné appear deserving in the eyes of Madame de la Fayette; and laudatory as it is, we think it even falls short of what she was entitled to. Imperfections she had; but the phrase of the old anatomists, and which Macaulay applies to Addison, is eminently suited to Madame de Sévigné—'she was sound in the noble parts.' In her there was no littleness, no envy, no false pride. She was indeed good, noble-minded, and gentle: there is not, in our opinion, one thought in that voluminous correspondence which she would have wished at any time to erase or to recall.

To the most noble genius she united every womanly virtue, and many which oftener fall to the lot of men. It is with an impression of deep sadness that we reflect how full of sorrow and disappointment was the life of one who deserved all that the world can give. True, she had no great sorrows; for though she mourned her husband, he had long before his death become a source of humiliation to her. To a superficial observer she may appear as a prosperous, gay, charming woman;

* Worthy of you, and worthy to appear, I ought to be your lover, and that I have not the honour to be.

and yet with the most loving heart, with the keenest sensibility, she found herself again and again baffled and crossed in all the hopes she most cherished.

With every charm to allure and attach, she was neglected by the husband she loved; and the bitterness of the later days of his life—to which she never alludes—we discern in a few lines she wrote when at a ripe age. Talking of the blindness of men, she adds, as if gazing back on the past—'I have known some, indeed, who were taken with beauties very little to be admired.' When left a widow, at five and twenty, she looked to her children for happiness and comfort, and in neither did she find the consolation she sought. Her daughter two years after her marriage to the Comte de Grignan, quitted Paris for Provence, and her permanent return to the capital, for which Madame de Sévigné longed with a passionate eagerness, never took place. Her son, brave, witty, and amiable, one whom she believed destined to be successful, either from indolence or weariness, frustrated her maternal ambition by retiring to obscurity while still in the prime of life.

In whatever desires she may have indulged for herself, whatever her hopes of those better days for which every human heart seems to yearn, they never came to pass. Cares and tribulations did come, for she more than shared those of the children she so dearly loved. In spite of this her heart and mind were of that mould which bears and does not repine:

her disposition was to be happy: she had inherited the independent and brave spirit of her soldier-father, with the meekness and submission of her sainted grandmother—she was the true daughter of the free-spoken Chantal, and the no less true descendant of Sainte Françoise. She often repeats—'I am not *dévote;*' but she was eminently religious. In all things she sees the hand of the Divine Providence: she accepts sorrows, and she hopes to be compensated because of her faith in that Providence. The frequency of this thought in the mind of one who led a life which is termed worldly, must be a surprise to many: her reliance on the goodness of God, on His better wisdom, is such as few of the elect can boast of; but so genuine is her simplicity, so complete is the absence of cant or pride, that we feel persuaded it is quite possible to peruse with some care Madame de Sévigné's letters and hardly notice this religious sentiment—it is the marrow of her soul.

She was one who loved all that was true and beautiful. In the charms of Nature she revels; she is never weary of extolling them: her mind was as a fountain of living waters which no drain could exhaust; she might look again and again on the same pleasing picture, and ever with the same relish—a relish she imparted to others. She often recalls the words of Mademoiselle de Scudéry—'that a heart is to be judged by its capacity for loving;' and she remarks—'If this be true, mine is no common one.' We would add further—that a heart is to be judged by its capacity

to praise: it is a faculty seldom enjoyed. How rare the man or woman who finds a true pleasure in noticing, in bringing to light, in celebrating the virtue, the genius, or the gifts of others! Madame de Sévigné could praise, and do so in no niggardly spirit; her soul was so human and so large that she felt glad when humanity showed its bright and redeeming sides. She also believed in goodness: ingratitude she experienced, calumny she bore, and still that belief lived—'The world is not long unjust:' this thought recurs frequently.

We can fancy no more ridiculous accusations than those which would represent Madame de Sévigné as a pretentious blue-stocking, and as a woman with a mind so narrow that a minuet danced with Louis XIV sufficed to elate with joy. Nothing but the most superficial acquaintance with her character can excuse such statements, which are only to be compared to the wisdom of a person who asserts that Italy has the same climate as Russia because it sometimes freezes in Rome or Naples. We shall not attempt to justify Madame de Sévigné against these charges; the monument of genius she has left speaks loud enough. No one capable of appreciating what is good and ennobling can become acquainted with her letters and not admit that her character needs no defence. That she wrote as others spoke in her day, and in language which may at times strike us as somewhat affected and far-fetched; that she felt the admiration, nay, we will

even say the adoration, with which Louis XIV was regarded by his subjects, we are prepared to admit; that she expresses her adoration in terms which to us are extreme and displeasing, is true beyond cavil; but to draw any conclusions unfavourable to her from this is equally rational with saying that she had bad taste because she submitted to the fashions then in vogue. To worship Louis XIV was to be a good patriot, and nothing more: the king was the king, and not a man. Absurd as you will, no more absurd in the Frenchman or Frenchwoman of the seventeenth century than the devotion of a good Catholic to the Pope in our days: then, as now, they revered a principle and the representative of a higher power.

And because Madame de Sévigné had a just pride in the long line of noble ancestors from whom she descended, is it to be inferred that her feelings on this point bear any similarity to those of a *parvenu* of yesterday? To be in a condition to judge fairly of men and women who lived in another age, we must imagine ourselves living in that age—that is, espousing its prejudices and faults, as we espouse those of our own time, which two hundred years hence will, we doubt not, appear fully as ridiculous.

There exists a vast number of persons ever ready to denounce as exaggerated and unnatural every sentiment which they have not themselves experienced, and who would doubt the evidence of their own eyes rather than imagine that some beings are possessed of

faculties of which they have no conception. This is what constitutes the real incredulity of the world, and gives rise to scoffers of all kinds. People of this class have not scrupled to pronounce Madame de Sévigné's attachment for her daughter extremely overdrawn. It is asserted by these detractors that inwardly she rather rejoiced at a separation which afforded her an occasion for writing such delightful letters, and that she paraded her motherly love as she might have done a string of pearls. The plea is, that a woman of sixty could not in reality be so anxious, so solicitous for the well-being of a daughter of forty, nor express herself in terms so varied and so endearing, and this solely because of their respective ages.

Tennyson, in a beautiful and simple poem—'The Grandmother'—has illustrated this sentiment, where the old dame thinks of Willy, the eldest bairn, who died at threescore and ten, as the boy, 'ruddy and white, and strong on his legs;' and of her remaining sons, the one that went at sixty and the other that went at sixty-five, as 'pattering over the boards.' Nothing can be more sweet and touching than this short poem; nothing more true to human nature. Mothers will look on men as on the babes they bore: it is a relationship over which Time can have no sway.

Madame de Sévigné, in writing to her daughter—particularly during the first ten years which followed

Madame de Grignan's marriage—often appears to be pleading her own cause: she speaks of her great affection, she begs her child to consider it; she demands to be loved in return. It will perhaps be suggested that a mother ought not to stoop to such means. We would say, that the necessity ought not to arise for a mother to have to do so. Madame de Sévigné had invested her all in Madame de Grignan, and perceiving that she who was to repay the interest of a great debt was doing so grudgingly, she feared she would lose both principal and interest. We are persuaded that Madame de Sévigné lived in the apprehension of seeing withdrawn from her that heart which ought to have been hers beyond all others. To gentle reproaches Madame de Grignan answered with the tame excuse, that she was not given to manifesting outwardly what she felt. This is enough; Madame de Sévigné asks no more: again and again, as if wishing to persuade herself, she repeats,—'I know what your affection is for me; I know how true you are;' and when, in later years, Madame de Grignan's heart, cold though it was, seems to have melted, the only repining of the mother is—'You did not, my daughter, always disclose this tenderness for me.'

That Madame de Sévigné was sensible of every neglect in word or action of her daughter we are fully convinced; that she loved her none the less in spite of it there can be no doubt. Madame de Sévigné's letters are the outpourings of her soul: reproofs which she

might not have spoken, she writes; and from afar she indulges in endearments under which the disdainful and beautiful comtesse, if hearing instead of reading them, might have proved impatient. The same thought, the same sentiment is reproduced many hundreds of times, and yet it is done without sameness or weariness; it is ever clothed in a fresh garb as genuine and as brilliant as the preceding.

Some of Madame de Sévigné's letters are so well known as to be quoted at random much in the same way as is the 'To be, or not to be,' and other passages of Shakspeare. Now to attempt to form a judgment of her genius from these specimens, would be as reasonable as to pronounce on Shakspeare's dramatic power from mere fragments. Madame de Sévigné's letters form a whole: to understand her thoroughly, not one of them, not ten, but all must be read. They are as a jewel of incomparable solidity, brilliancy, and form; the materials—the gold, the diamonds, the rubies—are perfect when viewed separately, but to compose the ornament for which the artist is to derive fame, they require skilful arrangement in the setting.

Elevation of thought, marvellous ability to comprehend and retain, a profound insight into the depths of human nature, a true charity, and—we would wish to insist on this—an extraordinary good sense; all this had Madame de Sévigné: she judged rightly without effort; nothing tortuous in that noble intelligence.

The advice which she gives on all subjects to Madame de Grignan resembles that of Lord Chesterfield in one sense only,—it always perfectly suits the purpose. To form an idea of how considerably in advance of her contemporaries Madame de Sévigné really was, there is nothing more profitable than to read the memoirs of the Duc de St.-Simon, and to contemplate his mind, great and powerful as it was, cramped and deformed by pride, arrogance, and servility.

Madame de Sévigné thought she would have enjoyed a life at court, and after the marriage of her daughter she more than once seems to regret that she has no sufficient motive for going there. We fancy that under no circumstance, without suffering greatly, could she have submitted to the thraldom which was there the lot of even the most favoured. For the privileges and pleasures of the court the king made people pay so dearly, that we can only admire the patience and fortitude which, from the proudest duke to the most obscure menial, all seem to have possessed in so eminent a degree. When we place side by side the overweening self-sufficiency of St.-Simon and the little feminine vanity which causes Madame de Sévigné to record her 'good fortune' in being specially addressed by Louis XIV on this or that occasion, then can we laugh at the one and appreciate the other.

Justice has hardly been done to Madame de Sévigné's merits as a woman: our desire is to aid in bringing them more to light, to impart to others a

portion of the delight, of the moral good which an intimate acquaintance with her letters has afforded us. We have for her a regard, not as for one who died two hundred years ago, but as for a dear and revered friend just passed away. We have shed tears over the last letter she wrote simply because it was the last.

It has been related that when the great poet Henri Heine died, Théophile Gautier wondered how many years Nature would require to again produce such a mind; and in regard to Madame de Sévigné, we believe that after a lapse of two centuries she still stands alone as a woman equally great for her talents and her virtues.

## CHAPTER II.

1592–1643.

Parentage of Madame de Sévigné.—Her birth.—Death of her father and mother.—Assigned to the care of the Abbé de Coulanges.—Her tutors: Ménage; Chapelain.

In the year 1626, Richelieu was master of France, and Buckingham lord-paramount in England—Monsieur le Cardinal omnipotent, and 'Steenie' all-powerful. James I, 'the wisest fool in Christendom,' had been dead but a year, and Louis XIII, a bigot with a narrow and revengeful mind, sat on the throne of St. Louis. A great tide was rising in both countries; the billows were heaving, and not even the far-seeing could guess what would be revealed when they broke. In both countries there was a fermentation which prompted men to draw their swords and say their say—in both it was the dawn of day; and if blood was to redden the glory of the English sun, civil strife was in France also to cause loss and grief. The country gentlemen of England were protesting against the encroachments of the crown, whilst the flower of French nobility was being decimated by the unrelent-

ing minister, and still the restlessness could not be subdued: though the blood of a Montmorency was twice shed on the block, the Fronde was yet to be. It was an eventful period, one in which men and things appear to have had a height and breadth in comparison with which we are but as dwarfs.

In that stirring time there came into the world a woman of a rare genius, the very personification, not indeed of the 'siècle de Louis XIV,' but of the seventeenth century—noble and strong, virtuous and gay.

The family of Rabutin was both ancient and illustrious; but we should care little for their long pedigree, were it not for the two great women of their name—one a saint, the other a genius.

When the wars were over, when France was at peace and Henri IV established on the throne, Christophe de Rabutin-Chantal who had fought well for the monarch of the 'white plume,' returned to the home of his fathers. The old castle of Bourbilly was even then a venerable pile; Rabutin, the château of their name, already fallen and deserted. There Christophe de Rabutin, who had received many wounds for his king, turned his thoughts to a quieter life, and in 1592 married Jeanne-Françoise Frémyot, daughter of Bénigne Frémyot, president of the parliament of Dijon, a man universally esteemed. The child of his house was worthy of such a parent, and by her many amiable qualities, by the love she bore her husband, she en-

deared herself greatly to him. Several children were born to them: Celse-Bénigne, the father of Madame de Sévigné, in 1596, four years only before the death of his sire, who escaped from so many perils—battles and duels (of the latter he fought eighteen)—to perish from a blow accidentally received at the hand of a neighbour and friend, the Seigneur of Chaselle. After this sad event the young widow, with her four helpless children, continued to reside with her father-in-law, Guy de Rabutin-Chantal (the first who had taken the latter name), and in the solitude of a gloomy manor-house, forced to please a cross and whimsical old man, she had on many occasions to exercise those virtues which, a century after her death, earned for her the glory of canonization.

The life of Madame de Chantal seemed destined to be passed in the fulfilment of the humble and difficult duties God had set for her; but in the accomplishment of her daily task her heart could not satisfy its cravings for perfection. She was one of those who to seek the higher virtues, often set aside the practice of those they deem inferior. For some years François de Sales, Bishop of Geneva, had been drawing Madame de Chantal to God; and to obey His will, as they believed, in 1610 she left her home and children to become the founder of the Order of the Visitation. To quit her house she had to step over the body of her young son, who, lying across the threshold, implored her with tears and supplications to

remain, but without avail. What courage upheld her in that terrible moment when she called on Nature to silence its holiest instincts! No doubt she thought she was doing right, but by her cruel act her children became orphans indeed.

After his mother had left, Celse-Bénigne was taken to the house of his grandfather, the good President Frémyot, and there he grew into manhood. 'He became,' says Bussy-Rabutin, 'one of the most accomplished cavaliers of France: he danced with a grace incomparable; he fenced remarkably well; . . . he was extremely lively, clothing every thought he uttered in a garb quite peculiar. To hear him converse was a pleasure. But he did not charm by this alone: it was by the grace and air with which he spoke. In him all was playful.' * To this the Baron de Chantal added the qualities and faults of his race: he was intrepidly brave, proud, passionate, and so out-spoken that he made himself many enemies. his bluntness of speech was proverbial, and from a letter he wrote to Schomberg, on the latter being made a Marshal of France, we can form an opinion of his temperament. It runs thus:—

'Monseigneur,

'Qualité—Barbe noire—Familiarité.

'CHANTAL.'

This laconic epistle is to be interpreted—You are a marshal because you are a man of quality, have a

* Histoire généalogique.

black beard, like that of the king, and are admitted to his familiarity. No wonder that such a man had more than one duel, and that he was ever ready to take the part of second for his friends—in those days no passive position. The rashness and impetuosity of Chantal led him into many troubles, and ultimately brought about his death.

In 1624 he had united himself to Marie de Coulanges, of a family respectable by the character of its members, and by the high positions which they occupied: Philippe de Coulanges, father of Marie, being 'Conseiller du Roy en ses Conseils d'Estat et Privé.' This change of life does not seem to have sobered the young Baron de Chantal, for we find him on Easter Sunday of this very year, in the church where he had been partaking of the Holy Sacrament, receiving from Montmorency Bouteville a summons, which was instantly obeyed, to stand by him in a combat he was about to engage in at the Porte St.-Antoine. Without changing his attire, Chantal hurried to join his reckless and unfortunate friend, who three years afterwards expiated his faults on the scaffold. The scandal caused by this duel on Easter Sunday, and the circumstances attending it, was great; prosecutions ensued, and for a time Chantal was forced to hide. When at last the storm had subsided, and he reappeared at court, it was to meet the frowns of the cardinal and the cold looks of the king: from that hour Chantal knew that the road to glory and fortune was closed to him.

It was at this troublous period that Marie de Rabutin was born. At the Place Royale-du-Marais, on the 5th of February, 1626, she first saw the light. She was not the first child of her parents; a daughter who did not survive her birth having preceded her. It is of that little one Madame de Chantal from her convent writes to the other grandmother, Madame de Coulanges—'We must bless God, my beloved sister, that this dear infant is in paradise, where eternally she will celebrate His goodness, and pray for her dear father and mother. God will give others if He pleases.'

One other was to become the great and good woman who now engages our attention.

It is impossible to record these first years of Madame de Sévigné's existence, and recall the death of all nearest to her, without experiencing a feeling of great love and pity for one who was so early bereaved: her young and brave father (she was like him in many things—in her wit, sometimes audacious; in her free spirit, in her true courage) died within six months after her birth.

Most of the events which crowd the first half of the seventeenth century had their origin in love and gallantry. The smiles of the fair sex foil or aid the calculations of statesmen. Armies are brought together, blood is shed, to propitiate or revenge some beauty, be she queen or duchess. It is sufficient that Anne of Austria is on the throne of France, Buckingham being

lord of her heart, of England, and of his king, to assemble off the French coast the armed galleys of England, commanded by that great and gaudy actor who was to fail once ere the curtain fell upon his dazzling apparition. When the news spread that the English had come, many who longed for warlike fame joined in a brave band, and went to meet the invaders. Of the number was Chantal: he left his anxious and gentle wife to meet a glorious death.

On the 22nd of July, 1627, the English landed on the Isle of Rhé. A bloody battle ensued; the French suffered great loss, many of noble name fell to rise no more, and amongst the slain was the brave Chantal: in the flower of his age, full of hope and promise, he died, but to live immortally in his child. In his singular destiny, standing between such a parent and such a daughter, he can be justly compared to those princes who have been the son of a king and the father of a king, but never themselves king. His greatest claim to be remembered is, not what he was, but what he might have been: he is the link between two women of merit so rare that that link must have been of precious metal.

Great was the mourning when the news of his untimely end reached his pious mother and his loving wife. Sainte Chantal on this occasion writes thus to the young widow whose destiny so nearly resembled her own:—'Be careful of yourself, my dearest daughter; keep yourself to bring up in the fear of our Lord

this offspring of a holy wedlock. Guard her as a trust, without allowing your affection to be too greatly attached, so that the Divine Goodness may take a greater care of, and be all things to, this dear little child.' Never was it more needed that such a prayer should be heard. Six years only after the death of her husband did Marie de Coulanges follow him, and then indeed the Divine Goodness had to be all in all to the little orphan. Sainte Chantal, wholly occupied by the cares of her Order, never even saw the child of her only son. It was Madame de Coulanges who took the little one to rear and cherish; but this loving care soon failed the predestined orphan: twelve months had not elapsed since the Baronne de Chantal had been carried to her rest, ere she was followed by her mother, when all womanly solicitude for Marie de Chantal was at an end.

Old Monsieur de Coulanges lived a few years longer, and his orphan grandchild remained with him. Her aunt, Madame de Coulanges, the mother of Emmanuel —'le petit Coulanges' of so much wit and so many songs—seems at this period to have shown a great interest in the welfare of her little niece. When the grandfather died the family met together to name a guardian for the young Marie.

At this family gathering Bussy-Rabutin, though only eighteen, stood in the place of his father, Léonor de Rabutin, first cousin to the Baron de Chantal. It was his first share in the destiny of one who, when grown

to womanhood, was to occupy so important a place in his life. The choice of the assembled relations fell on the Abbé de Coulanges, Prieur de Livry, the brother of Marie de Coulanges, Baronne de Chantal: he was then only nine and twenty, but worthy of the trust which fell to him, and which he so zealously fulfilled. When he died, at the ripe age of eighty, Madame de Sévigné declares in warm and glowing terms that she owed to him the happiness and peace of her life. For fifty years he was to her the most faithful friend and the wisest counsellor. True, the Abbé de Coulanges found in his niece one to whom Providence had been more than bountiful, and all her varied gifts he cultivated with a watchful solicitude. In girlhood he took care that she should receive that brilliant and solid education which was to be the corner-stone of her mind. For masters she had men such as Ménage and Chapelain: they prepared her to occupy a place at the Hôtel de Rambouillet, and become worthy of the name of *Précieuse* when that epithet implied all that could be said in praise of a woman.

From the time she was intrusted to the Abbé de Coulanges, Marie de Rabutin passed her life in the happy solitude of Livry, that 'aimable désert,' which she was always afterwards to seek with such pleasure. She loved to write nowhere so well as at Livry; there she was at rest, and in the holy enjoyment of Nature forgot many of her sorrows and anxieties. But now, in her bright childhood, no shadow falls across her path,

and with her young cousin Emmanuel she may sport in the gardens of Livry with no care at her heart and with a smile on her lips.

The Abbé de Coulanges, of solid but not brilliant attainments, was a man of strict integrity: he early imbued his niece with those principles which she was to carry through life; from him she learnt to admire the 'holy virtue of economy,' as she terms it, and to judge rightly of those ostentatious spendthrifts, who ruining themselves, beggar others. His influence added no doubt to develop that perfect good sense which was in her, and on which, as a firm foundation, reposes her genius. Whatever obligation Madame de Sévigné was under to the Abbé de Coulanges, she repaid it by unbounded gratitude. It was his rare privilege to have the constant companionship of his cherished niece to the end of his career. Except for those seven years of her wedded life, it may be said that she never left him: his comfort and pleasure were the objects of her unwearied attention; even the fondly-loved daughter gave way before the 'Bien Bon': where he is concerned there is no hesitation. Not even to go to Grignan, the haven of her desires, will Madame de Sévigné consent to leave her uncle; and it is clearly discernible she acts thus, not merely from a strict sense of what was her duty (an impulse irresistible, and which she ever obeyed), but because she was prompted by the truest affection.

When Marie de Rabutin quitted Livry to take her

place in the brilliant society of Paris, she surprised all by the attraction of her manners, by her brilliant wit and cultivated understanding.

This we think an opportune moment to say a few words of the two instructors to whom she owed so many talents. First we must speak of Ménage—the Abbé Ménage, but 'Abbé' only to reap 'bénéfices,' fat livings which involved neither responsibility nor trouble. His wit, his sagacity, his perfect knowledge of many languages, had earned him a reputation which posterity has not confirmed. When called upon to instruct Mademoiselle de Chantal in Italian and literature, he was still young, and his age rendered him particularly susceptible to the attractions of his pupil, whose humble servant and admirer he early declared himself. We must not be surprised at this: in the seventeenth century rank created such a separation, birth threw such a gulf between human beings, that tender sentiments from those in an inferior station of life were deemed of little consequence. A woman of quality would take a pride in inspiring such feelings, but she was never supposed to be disturbed by their existence: Ménage might then freely declare himself the slave of Mademoiselle de Chantal, and she consent to treat him as such.

There is no doubt that the nature of Ménage's attachment was such as to cause him often to suffer keenly. He had adored Mademoiselle de Chantal; he adored Madame de Sévigné, and there are traces in

letters penned by her kind hand, which show that more than once the wounded susceptibility of Ménage led him to abstain from seeing his pupil. There exist two letters signed 'Chantal' which nevertheless were probably written by Madame de Sévigné after her marriage, at a very early period no doubt, and in which she displays her gentle kindness and consideration for her master. Evidently there had been some quarrel, and she writes to Ménage—

'Once more I tell you, we do not understand each other; and it is your good fortune to be eloquent, otherwise all you have written to me, though it be marvellously well said, would not be worth much. Still it does not alarm me, and I feel my conscience so free of all you tax me with, that I do not despair of forcing you to acknowledge the truth of this. But to do so is impossible if you will not consent to call upon me. If you are determined it shall not be to-day, I entreat you to let it be to-morrow. If you do not come, maybe you will not close your door to me, and I shall follow you up so closely that you will be forced to admit that you are in the wrong. You wish to cover me with ridicule by declaring that you have quarrelled with me, only because you are sorry at my departure. If it were so I should deserve "les Petites-Maisons," and not your hatred; but the difference is great, and I cannot comprehend why, when losing a person, and regretting her, it is needful because of

that to treat her at the last interviews with the utmost coldness. It is a way of behaving quite extraordinary, and as I am not accustomed to it, you must excuse my surprise. However, let me beg you to believe that there is not one of the old or new friends of whom you speak that I esteem and love as I do you. This is why, before losing your friendship, I beg you to let me have the consolation of showing you to be wrong, and of saying that it is your affection which has ceased.

'CHANTAL.'

This letter proved effectual, as may well be surmised. Shortly after she writes again—

'It is you who have taught me to speak of our friendship as extinct: as for myself, bearing you the affection I do, I should never have supposed such a thing. Accuse yourself only of the words which have displeased you, and believe I can experience no greater joy than to know that you still entertain for me the friendship you had promised, and to hear of its glorious resurrection. Adieu.

'MARIE CHANTAL.'

These letters, full of easy wit, were written by a young lady of eighteen, and give promise of that happy felicity of expression in which Madame de Sévigné was to excel.

Chapelain, much older than Ménage, a bad poet and

a good critic—unless when commanded by Richelieu to disparage the 'Cid'—formed his pupil's mind with a more serious intent, and though he was not indifferent to her charms, his sentiments must have been widely different from those of Ménage.

No doubt in her admiration of these two men Madame de Sévigné erred with her generation; she was one of those who were prepared to admire the long-expected poem of the 'Pucelle,' the tedious and obscure fragments of which called forth loud expressions of applause from the best judges of the day. For us it is easy to point out what is ridiculous, and exclaim at the bad poetry of those authors whose fame we now wonder at, but whose influence we are unacquainted with. We never heard their voice; we know not how came the ready answer, how were spoken those lines whose faults we distinguish so easily: nothing now remains but the faint image, the shadow of what was living and fresh two centuries ago.

# CHAPTER III.

1610–44.

France in 1644.—Louis XIII.—Cardinal Richelieu.—Anne of Austria.—Battle of Rocroy.—Duc d'Enghien.—Cardinal Mazarin.—The 'Cid.'

BEFORE following Mademoiselle de Chantal into the new life about to begin for her, we wish to make a few remarks on the times in which her lot was cast: to appreciate her virtues and talents it is necessary to form an exact idea of her surroundings.

To understand clearly the state of France in 1644—that is, the year of Madame de Sévigné's marriage—we must glance back a few years, and note what progress had been made, what changes had occurred since Henri IV fell by the knife of Ravaillac. France had then attained to pre-eminence in Europe. Under the rule of Marie de Médicis, as intriguing and wily as any of her merchant race, the country soon began to lose some of its prestige. It might have sunk still lower with such a king as Louis XIII, had not the strong hand of a Richelieu come to the rescue. Notwithstanding apparent prosperity, the canker was eating into the heart of the nation; the strong and

manly race, that which gave Henri IV his companions, was fast disappearing. Idolatry of the king, and consequent baseness, had been planted, and was now throwing out strong roots. The expansion of French grandeur, of French glory, was to terminate, leaving in France nothing but 'witty valets.'* Instead of the chivalrous monarch—often sad at heart under his jaunty smile—there reigned the dull, pale, sickly king, unhappy in all things, hating and despising his queen, —who deserved blame and pity equally—and torn between the influence of his mother and the command which the Cardinal de Richelieu had obtained over his weak mind.

It is tragic to read of the desperate uncertainties of the master who was the servant of his minister, and of the fights, the rebuffs, the triumphs of the servant who was the master. We behold Richelieu dragging the feeble monarch to the siege of Rochelle; we see that indomitable will creating an army and exhausting France to enable him to crush the Protestants, that thrifty and serious race who were making their country rich; towns that had been prosperous, provinces that had been enlightened became abandoned and plunged into dark superstition.

Still the cardinal unflinchingly and unfearingly pursued his course, striving for the grandeur of France, for the power to be obtained by royalty; the two

* 'Laquais spirituels.'—Michelet.

queens—Marie de Médicis, the mother, Anne of Austria, the wife—both his bitter enemies, both wishing his death. What can be more gloomy than the picture of the king—taciturn and bigoted; of the queen—devout and gallant; of the queen dowager—without shame or respect in her old age as in her prime; and the master of them all, the sickly-strong man, with his thin face, his piercing eyes—still to be seen in Philippe de Champagne's picture—having no rest and no peace, and lording over France and its king only by unceasing toil and trouble? Repose, however, came early for both king and minister. On the 14th of May, 1643, Louis XIII expired, five months only after the death of Richelieu.

Anne, no longer young, and having nearly lost what had been her only charms—her dazzling complexion of lilies and roses—retaining still, perhaps, that hand which had been matchless, was now regent. Passionate and gentle by turns, she inspired true love and ardent devotion in many of those nearest attached to her person. A Madame de Chevreuse was ready to intrigue and suffer for her; a proud and virtuous maiden like Mademoiselle de Hautefort, the lovely southern girl whose beauty had warmed the king's cold heart, served and loved her, even though it brought disgrace upon herself. It was not at the moment when Anne assumed power that the old failings, and her conspiring with the stranger could be remembered. One thing alone was in the minds of

the people—she was a queen, a mother, and she had been persecuted. France seemed to be springing to her feet after a weary nightmare: a child on the throne, a woman to reign for him, and commanding his armies a young man—Mars himself, with his feathery helmet and his shining armour riding gaily before his troops, and leading them to victory.

On the 19th of May, 1643, the battle of Rocroy was fought and won. The news of this victory spread a joy that amounted to madness: the young warrior with the eagle beak was lifted on the instant to a pinnacle so high, that with his princely blood he became dangerous to the queen herself. The Duc d'Enghien, whose name was in every mouth, was the son of that sombre Condé, so greedy and so repulsive, hoarding his great wealth with a careful hand. His mother was Charlotte-Marguerite de Montmorency, whose beauty had enthralled the heart of the Béarnais in his later years. The husband and wife hated each other, but their mutual interests had led Madame la Princesse to court the cardinal who had ordered her brother's death. The young Enghien, born in 1621, had received from his severe father an education which fitted him to be a hero at an age when others are but boys. Brought up at Bourges by the Jesuits, he pursued the most serious studies; and afterwards frequented the celebrated academy of Benjamin, whose aim was to form men to be virtuous and courageous. The son of Monsieur le Prince was treated with the

same austerity as the simplest gentleman. Manners and gallantry he learnt in the society of his beautiful mother and his no less beautiful sister, Madame de Longueville. With so much to aid him, it is not surprising that his claims became great, and that his hungry ambition led him to take part in the Fronde, of which as yet no warning appeared. The queen, obedient to Mazarin, was ruling France, not as Richelieu had done, but in the interest and for the welfare of Giulio Mazarini. This would-be great politician had but one god—Fortune, and fortune for self. A gambler in all things, he played to take the place of Richelieu, just as he threw his cards to win gold. Meanwhile Enghien was pursuing his triumphs—after Rocroy, Fribourg; after Fribourg, Nordlingen; and still France was getting poorer: discord was rife, and civil war at hand.

While such stirring events were taking place, the manners and the modes of life were at once loose and grand. The regent submitted to Mazarin because she loved him. Men and women, the greatest and proudest, ignored any law but their pleasure: a few only seemed to protest against the prevailing immorality, but such examples were rare and far between. Dignity, honour, and a pretence to virtue belonged to women such as Madame de Montbazon, Madame de Guémenée, and Madame de Chevreuse, who were all followed by a host of lovers. Madame de Longueville herself, a very goddess, a princess of the blood,

the beloved sister of Condé, was to throw all aside for La Rochefoucauld. These were the people among whom the young and charming Marquise de Sévigné was to find herself.

## CHAPTER IV.

1644–7.

Mademoiselle de Chantal at the age of eighteen.—Bussy-Rabutin.—The Marquis de Sévigné.—Marriage of Madame de Sévigné.—They retire to the Rochers.—Return to Paris.—Birth of a daughter.

MADEMOISELLE DE RABUTIN-CHANTAL was soon surrounded by a host of suitors and admirers, attracted by her large fortune, her enticing manners, and her great beauty. The man who best knew her—Bussy-Rabutin—has left a description of her personal appearance, which, though written in a moment of anger, and dwelling much on defects, sums up with—'She had the most beautiful complexion; lips rosy and fresh; a fine figure; and hair, fair, thick, and wavy.' Another contemporary says of her:—'She is fair, with a complexion which answers admirably to the colour of her hair: her features are animated, her skin smooth, and the whole forms one of the most agreeable women of Athens [Paris].'

We may conclude from these statements that a dazzling complexion and golden hair formed the most prominent attractions of the young Burgundian heiress. Her nose was somewhat square, and she often in her

letters refers to its imperfection; her jaw had in part the same defect; but her blue eyes were full of fire, of wit, of gentleness. That she was pleasing and beautiful there can be no doubt: it is impossible to gaze on portraits of her, even when her youth was passed, without wishing to look again.

In her own family there existed a most eligible alliance for Marie de Rabutin: her cousin, Bussy-Rabutin, by his near relationship, by the name he bore, by his attractive person, appeared to possess all that was requisite to insure success. 'Roger de Rabutin,' says he of himself, 'had eyes large and soft, mouth well made, nose large and nearly aquiline, physiognomy felicitous, and hair fair, wavy, and light.' The portraits which exist of Bussy do not contradict this flattering picture: his appearance is noble and pleasing, his brow full of intelligence, and his eyes sparkle with a *finesse* most alluring. To these fascinations were added wit and boldness. What prevented the two cousins, who at all times had the most sincere regard for each other, being united is not known. Bussy was possessed of a scanty patrimony, and the great wealth of his cousin would have well suited his ambitious designs; moreover, his father was urging him to become the possessor of it. It pleased Bussy to imply in after years, that he thought his cousin 'the most charming woman in existence to be the wife of another;' but this statement of Bussy does not accord either with his true nature or with the

character of his cousin. More probably the Abbé de Coulanges, in his wisdom, did not see the happiness of his ward in such an alliance; and at the age of eighteen Marie de Rabutin was affianced to Henri, Marquis de Sévigné, the representative of a noble Breton family worthy to be allied to the blood of the Rabutins. Monsieur de Sévigné was also a nephew of the famous Paul de Gondi, Archbishop of Corinth. It was the mediation of the latter that brought about the match; and the advantages of being related to a man supposed to be called to play so important a part in the affairs of France were no doubt considered.

Negotiations were commenced about the beginning of the year 1644, and in May the marriage was to have taken place; but a duel was the prologue, as seven years afterwards it was the epilogue of this unhappy union. The Marquis de Sévigné, while crossing the Pont Neuf, struck with the flat of his sword a Breton gentleman of the name of Paul Hay du Chastellet, who had spoken some words to his discredit. A meeting ensued, and the promised bridegroom was wounded so seriously that his life was in danger. Owing to this it was not till the 4th of August, in the church of Saint-Gervais and Saint-Protais, that the nuptial rite was completed. The ceremony was performed by Jacques de Neuchèze, Bishop and Count of Chalon-sur-Saône, the uncle of the bride.

There is every reason to believe that the early years

of Madame de Sévigné's wedded life were as happy as they were prosperous: her husband was young and handsome, and of the same gladsome disposition as herself. Fortune had given them all that adds savour to life—a great name, a large income, and youth and health to enjoy it all. No presentiment of what was to be darkened the bright prospects of the youthful pair. They had left Paris very shortly after their marriage and had resorted to the Rochers,—'those poor Rochers,' as Madame de Sévigné was to term her home in Brittany, whose avenues, whose pure air, whose tranquil surroundings she was so often to praise.

The newly-married couple evidently remained there for a rather lengthened period, as is proved by the letter in verse which, in concurrence with Lenet, Bussy addressed to them in March, 1646, and in which he reproaches them for their too great attachment to their country home, and abjures them not to waste the best years of their life in solitude at the Rochers.

A few months after this date the marquis and his wife left Brittany to return to Paris, and on the 10th of October, 1646, Françoise-Marguerite de Sévigné was born. She was baptized on the 28th of the same month, the sponsors being Jacques Neuchèze, Bishop of Chalon, and Dame Claude-Marguerite de Gondi.

The year following this, the greatest event in Madame de Sévigné's life—the feelings she entertained for her daughter justifies us in saying this—

was spent in Paris amid the pleasures of the capital. It was then the

> 'Temps de la bonne régence,
> Temps où régnait une heureuse abondance,
> Temps où la ville aussi bien que la cour,
> Ne respirait que les jeux et l'amour.' *

Madame de Sévigné found herself naturally in the centre of all that was elegant and agreeable. The fame of the Hôtel de Rambouillet was still in the zenith, and the youthful marquise was in every way qualified to become an *Illustre*, a *Précieuse*, as the women who composed the circle of the 'Incomparable Arthénice' were designated.

Our narrative of the events in the life of Madame de Sévigné will now be interrupted by a few words respecting some of the frequenters of the hôtel in the Rue St.-Thomas-du-Louvre.

* The happy time of the regency, when plenty reigned, and the town as well as the court thought of nothing but pleasure and love.

# CHAPTER V.

1646.

The Marquise de Rambouillet.—The Hôtel de Rambouillet.—The Ruelle.—Character of Madame de Rambouillet.—Her portrait by Mademoiselle de Scudéry.—Daughters of Madame de Rambouillet. —Moral standard of the early part of the seventeenth century. —Voiture: his character.—Corneille: influence of his works.

CATHERINE DE VIVONNE, Marquise de Rambouillet, was the only daughter of Jean Vivonne, Marquis Pisani, and Julia Savelli, a Roman lady of noble birth. She who was to associate her name with a transformation of manners, and with all that is elegant and refined, was born at Rome in 1588, and from Italy she brought that taste for art and for literature which engaged her attention through life. At the age of twelve the young girl was united to Charles d'Angennes, Marquis de Rambouillet, and their long union was one, if not of uninterrupted felicity, at least of perfect reciprocated affection and confidence. Their residence, known to posterity as the Hôtel de Rambouillet, was in every particular the creation of the young marquise. It stood on the site before occupied by the Hôtel Pisani, part of the dower she had brought to her

husband. Not finding it, however, in accordance with her artistic and luxurious tastes, she had it pulled down, and from her own designs another mansion was erected. It occupied a comparatively small space in the Rue St.-Thomas-du-Louvre, but the gardens behind extended as far as the Carrousel and the Tuileries. Madame de Rambouillet introduced in the erection of her hôtel a happy modification of the then established style of architecture. Instead of placing the stairs in the centre of the house, they occupied an angle, thus leaving ample room for a suite of apartments. These were adorned with every device that art and taste could suggest, and fortune could procure. Even the colour of the hangings was new, and by its novelty was often commented on by her contemporaries. Instead of red or brown, then universally employed, Madame de Rambouillet's room was hung in blue and gold. The windows, opening to the ground, permitted the free passage of light and air. The garden was as the continuation of that earthly paradise of which Madame de Rambouillet's *ruelle* was the centre.

The *ruelle*, a word in daily use in the seventeenth century, and having then a more extended signification than in the present day, it will perhaps be necessary to explain more clearly of what it consisted. The bed, at that time monumental and magnificently adorned, stood in the centre of one end of the room, and for princesses and ladies of high quality it was raised from the ground by a few steps, called the *estrade*. Near

the foot of the bed, and dividing the apartment, stood a gilt balustrade, such as may still be seen in the room of Louis XIV at Versailles. Each side of the bed within that reserved space was called the *ruelle:* it was often still more enclosed by a colonnade reaching from the ground to the ceiling, and it then formed an *alcôve.*

Madame de Rambouillet was early afflicted with a singular malady, which compelled her to shun both fire and sunshine: she could not encounter either without the blood boiling in her veins. In her *alcôve*, surrounded by flowers, by books, by the portraits of those she loved, she sat enthroned, and received from all that homage so justly her due.

The Marquise de Rambouillet was barely twenty when, forsaking the pleasures of the Louvre, she began to attract around her a circle of intellect and beauty, no other passport than talent and good manners being requisite: intelligence, not birth, held the first place. Society in the youthful days of Madame de Rambouillet being still rough and uncouth in its ways, she determined to polish and change its manners, and in this she succeeded. Herself charming, affable, easily pleased, attentive to each and all, she presided with incomparable grace at those assemblies of the first *Précieuses*, so different from those afterwards so cruelly censured by Molière.

Madame de Rambouillet received from her admirers the name of the 'Incomparable Arthénice.' To be

styled a Précieuse was a mark of distinction, but to well understand the title we must know in what respect and veneration it was held by her friends. The marquise has won the approbation of all: in no pamphlet of that period does one word tarnish her pure fame. Virtue in her was revered, and it was loved: while so many were occupied by intrigues and gallantries, her character remained unsullied. Her mind, cultivated and refined, reflected the modest pride of her heart. Forgetful of self, ever ready to listen, to praise, to encourage, her approbation was sought by all who strove to become renowned. Her taste was deemed so perfect that even artificers sought her approval. In the midst of constant adulation she carefully guarded herself from being a partisan—in those quarrelsome days a task of such difficulty that she the more deserves commendation.

No portrait of this great and noble woman remains: beautiful she is declared to have been; and Mademoiselle de Scudéry, who was early initiated into the select circle of the Hôtel de Rambouillet, thus describes its mistress in the 'Grand Cyrus,' under the name of Cléomire:—

'If you would wish to picture to yourself this admirable being, imagine beauty in person. I do not tell you to evoke that beauty with which our painters endow Venus, it is not chaste enough; nor that they give to Pallas, it would be too proud; nor that of Juno, it is not sufficiently amiable; nor that of Diana,

which is too coarse; but I will tell you, that in order to represent Cléomire it would be necessary to unite what in the attributes of these divinities is most perfect, and then it would be possible to compose a tolerable likeness.

'Cléomire is tall, and her figure is excellent: all the features of her face are perfect; the delicacy of her complexion cannot be expressed; the majesty of her person is worthy of admiration; and from her eyes beam I know not what fire, which imprints respect in the soul of all those who behold it. For myself, I own that I have never approached Cléomire without experiencing in my heart a respectful fear, which obliges me when in her presence to think more of my actions than I do under any other circumstances. Moreover, the eyes of Cléomire are so beautiful, that it has been impossible ever to represent them well. Still they are eyes which, exciting admiration, have not caused what other eyes are wont to do; for if they inspired love, they inspired always equal fear and respect, and by a special privilege they have purified all the hearts they have inflamed. There is even in their brilliancy a modesty so great that it is shared by those who gaze on them, and I am strongly persuaded that there does not exist a man who ever dared to harbour a criminal design in the presence of Cléomire. Her physiognomy is the most handsome and noble I ever beheld, and there appears on her visage a tranquillity which shows clearly that of her soul. One can discern that all her

passions are under the control of her reason, and do not war in her heart. In fact, I do not believe that the colour of her cheeks has ever over-stepped its limits and spread itself over her face, except occasioned by the heat of summer or from feelings of modesty; never certainly by passion or any violent perturbation of the soul. So that Cléomire, being always equally peaceful, is always equally beautiful.

'To resume, if there was a wish to embody Chastity, so that all the earth might worship her, I would give her the aspect of Cléomire; to make Glory loved by all, I would again represent Cléomire; and if Virtue took a human garb, it must be that of Cléomire.'

Such was the very remarkable woman who contributed so much to transform the rough generation of the early years of the seventeenth century into the gallant and verse-loving aristocracy of the Fronde.

Of the numerous family—seven children—born to the Marquise de Rambouillet, only two of her daughters remained in the 'world': the three others entered the Church. The first-born son died in infancy; and the second, the Marquis Pisani, worthy of his illustrious parents, was killed at the age of thirty at the battle of Nordlingen. Madame de Rambouillet's two daughters, Julie and Angélique, aided their mother in her grateful task, and shared her pleasures and pursuits. The eldest particularly, Julie d'Angennes, more like a sister than a daughter—there was a difference of only sixteen years between them—bore to her mother

a perfect similarity in tastes and disposition. The strongest ties of affection united these two charming women, and so completely happy, so perfectly satisfied with her lot in that noble house was Julie d'Angennes, that she resisted all offers of marriage from her numerous admirers. The perseverance of one who for fourteen years sighed at her feet was recompensed at last; but when Julie d'Angennes consented to give her hand to the Marquis de Montausier, her youth was passed, and even then she yielded only to the wishes of her mother.

For twenty years Julie d'Angennes was a queen, the very soul of the circle over which her mother presided. It was she who inspired poets; men worshipped her, and women loved her: her amiability satisfied every claim upon her; and the lovers she discouraged she succeeded in not displeasing. Her manners were such as may be imagined from the school in which she had been brought up. Born for the world and its pleasures, she was its delight, and herself delighted in it. Julie d'Angennes shared the perilous maxims of her intimate friend the Marquise de Sablé, that women are created to be adored; that they alone inspire noble resolutions; and that a worthy recompense for every sacrifice is the bestowal of their esteem and friendship.

Chivalry was past, but its laws were revived in those books of love and gallantry which Anne of Austria had brought into fashion. Madame de Sablé

was the living impersonation of that platonic and refined sentimentality which inspired Mademoiselle de Scudéry, and which every woman was jealous to emulate. If we wish to enter into the spirit of the seventeenth century, we must understand its moral feelings. To be in love, and to inspire that passion, was a kind of necessity. To be an 'honnête homme,' as the phrase then went—and an 'honnête homme' is to be translated: a perfect gentleman, accomplished, brave, witty, and gallant—it was essential to pay attentions to some lady who accepted this homage, and whose good name was by no means sullied by it. In the seventeenth century it was supposed that a woman might be loved and yet remain pure. Such a supposition calls forth in our day an equivocal smile or a cynical remark. The *standard* of virtue, not the *practice* of it, is to us the real indication of the moral condition of a society; but we must not for one moment forget how different in that, and in every other respect, the first half of the seventeenth century was to the second half. In the declining years of Louis XIV, the 'Grand Cyrus' was as much out of fashion as the sentiments and aspirations which inspired it. Let us read Mademoiselle de Scudéry's account of the life and manners of the days of her youth:—

'Love (in the island of Chypre and the court of Paphos [Paris]) is not a simple passion, as in other countries, but a passion of necessity and good breeding.

All men must be enamoured, and all women loved. None are indifferent; and coldness of heart, to those who are capable of it, is reproved as a crime. It is considered such a reproach to be free of all ties, that those who are not in love pretend to be so. As for the ladies, custom does not require them to love, but only to suffer being loved; all their glory consists in effecting illustrious conquests, and, though they be rigorous towards them, not losing the lovers they have subdued The real honour of our "belles" is to maintain their slaves in obedience, not by favours, but by the sole power of their charms; the consequence is, that there is nearly an equal obligation for a man to be unsuccessful as to be attached. Ladies are not forbidden to acknowledge the perseverance of their lovers by an affection perfectly pure; on the contrary, Vénus-Uranie commands it. But often such a length of time is required to gain the heart of the loved one, that the pains of the conqueror are all but equal to the pleasures of his conquest. It is permitted to the "belles" to employ a few innocent artifices to subdue the hearts of men. The desire to please is not a crime; complacency even is laudable, provided there is no meanness. To express all in a few words, everything that can render women amiable, and cause them to be admired, is allowable if it offends neither purity nor modesty, which qualities, in spite of the prevailing gallantry of our island, are the principal virtues of all the ladies. Thus, having discovered the means to blend innocence

and love, they spend a life at once agreeable and diverting.'

The house of Madame de Rambouillet was a very 'temple of honour;' to be admitted into her circle a distinction greatly envied. Where she was concerned all etiquette was forsaken, and princesses of the blood, who honoured none but duchesses with their visits, waived all established customs in favour of Madame de Rambouillet. Madame de Sévigné in after years says—'The Hôtel de Rambouillet was the Louvre.' There, indeed, might be seen Madame la Princesse, the proud mother of the great Condé; there she came, accompanied by her sons and her lovely daughter, Mademoiselle de Bourbon, whom a tender friendship united to Julie d'Angennes. Not only did the young princesse bear a fond affection for the charming Julie, but women of a serious temper, like the Duchesse d'Aiguillon, the niece of Cardinal Richelieu, sought her companionship. Madame de Sablé used to say that she could conceive no greater felicity on earth than to spend her life with Mademoiselle de Rambouillet. She who could resist such constant praises and remain still amiable, must have been gifted with qualities rarely given to mortals. A contemporary has said, that after Helen no woman has had her beauty so celebrated. It is hardly possible to credit that a life begun amidst such noble and prosperous independence ended in servility. The Duchesse de Montausier is indeed a different woman from Mademoiselle de Rambouillet.

It would fill a volume to record the names of all who met at the Hôtel de Rambouillet: suffice it to say, that everyone of any note was to be found in the 'blue room' of the marquise; every attraction, birth, beauty, wit, and talent. He, of all others, who was the indulged favourite of those great ladies was Voiture. His letters, his verses, his repartees, excited general admiration. No doubt his wit was essentially that of the time, the day, the hour: his charming impromptus even now delight the reader by their singular felicity.

Voiture, of low origin (he was the son of a shoemaker), had become so self-sufficient through the indulgence and flattery he received, that the Duc d'Enghien used to say—'Really, if he were one of us, this man would be insufferable.' Voiture was allowed every liberty of speech; his presence in the 'blue room' was always hailed with delight. A spoilt child, he was vain and susceptible; at times supercilious, at others obsequious. His favourite fancy was to profess to be dying of love for some great lady. All his faults were excused, and some pretty verses were sufficient to cause him to be regarded as the most amiable of men.

A striking instance of the exceptional position of Voiture is given by Madame de Motteville, who relates that in 1644, being at Ruel, the Queen Regent and Madame la Princesse were driving through the park, when they espied Voiture walking, and appa-

rently absorbed in meditation. The queen, to please Madame la Princesse, called Voiture, and asked what he was dreaming of. The impromptu answer of the favoured poet is remarkable alike for its point, ingenuity, and boldness; the last verse, which we quote, being an allusion to the preference Anne of Austria was supposed to have entertained for Buckingham:—

'Je pensais (car nous autres poëtes
Nous pensons extravagamment)
Ce que, dans l'humeur où vous êtes,
Vous feriez, si dans ce moment
Vous avisiez en cette place
Venir le Duc de Buckingham;
Et lequel serait en disgrâce,
De lui ou de Père Vincent.' *

The queen was not offended at the pleasantry, and for a long time kept a copy of the lines, which she herself gave to Madame de Motteville.

Widely different from Voiture stands the great, the illustrious Corneille. He also received a warm welcome in that hospitable mansion. To Madame de Rambouillet and the assembled Précieuses he read his master-pieces. They were hailed with delight and applause, but not such, however, as posterity has awarded to that great man.

Pierre Corneille, when Madame de Sévigné entered

* I was wondering, for we poets do muse extravagantly, what, in the mood you are in, you would do if you saw the Duke of Buckingham coming this way, and who would be in disgrace, he or Père Vincent (the confessor of the queen).

society, was still in the prime of life, but his greatest works had already appeared, and now his genius, as if consumed by its own fire, was on the decline. As early as 1636—Corneille was then just thirty—he had written the 'Cid,' which for energy, deep feeling, the most vivid and touching delineation of passion, the most dramatic situation, remains unparalleled; all this clothed in a language noble and harmonious, rough yet polished. The sensation created was immense: the 'Cid," owing to its Spanish origin, found its way at once to the queen. It was represented in her presence at the Louvre, and the frowns of the cardinal, who saw in it a justification of duelling, could not restrain the applause, the tears, the delight of an enthralled audience: the well-known line—'All Paris for Chimène has the eyes of Rodrigue,' expresses the situation. It has been said that all the heroines of Corneille's tragedies are Frondeuses; and it is true. Madame de Longueville was to repeat to Coligny and to La Rochefoucauld what Chimène in her transport exclaims—

'Sors vainqueur d'un combat dont Chimène est le prix.'*

'Cinna,' which appeared in 1639, had been dedicated by the poet to the cardinal; but the panegyric on clemency came home like a satire on the unforgiving priest—Corneille, a 'bourgeois,' had espoused the passions and faults of the 'noblesse,' and after the

* Come out victorious from a fight where Chimène is the prize.

'Cid' the execution of a Montmorency for a duel would have been impossible.

But if Corneille was admired, his serious and quiet manners, his timid and defective reading, were not in any way calculated to make him, as Madame de Motteville puts it, an ornament of the 'belles ruelles.' No doubt Voiture occupied a more prominent place at the Hôtel de Rambouillet, and it was easier to comment on and praise his little verses than the majestic flow of Corneille.

We fancy the great man was often silent. Seated on one of the low stools reserved for those of inferior birth, he allowed the minor luminaries to chatter and please. There Balzac formed the centre of an attentive group; close by, Ménage discussed or explained some foreign verses; St.-Pavin and the Abbé Montreuil paid their gallant compliments to the fair, while Chapelain deigned to read some fragments of his long-expected 'Pucelle.' All applaud save that fair flower of Bourbon, who can hardly conceal her weariness. George de Scudéry is perhaps receiving those compliments due to his sister, who published her works under cover of his name. Proud, poor, and noble, he gazes admiringly on Anne de Bourbon. In the *ruelle*, Madame de Rambouillet is seated with her daughters, and at their feet the flower of the French nobility. But the afternoon is speeding on; it is time to go to the Cours la Reine, and the goodly company disperse.

# CHAPTER VI.

1646–7.

Character of Madame de Sévigné.—Her suitors: Bussy-Rabutin; the Comte du Lude; the Comte de Vassé; the Comte de Montmoron; the Marquis de Noirmoutier; Ménage; the Abbé de St.-Pavin; the Chevalier de Méré; the Abbé de Montreuil; Marigny; Segrais.—The Cours la Reine.

WHILE in Paris, Madame de Sévigné not only mixed in the select society of the Hôtel de Rambouillet, but she formed a little court of which she herself was the centre. The sprightliness of her humour, her predilection for amusement under every form, must in the eyes of many have added to the attractions Nature had given her. Of the principles professed at the Hôtel de Rambouillet she retained only what was really ennobling and elevating. Her virtue was amiability; her fault, certainly not prudery. In her words we think she might at times have been more discreet; but we must not forget that for repudiating some expressions which would now be intolerable in any polite circle, Madame de Rambouillet acquired that reputation for exaggerated delicacy and fastidiousness which in the minds of many is still inseparable from her name.

Madame de Sévigné, at all times so chaste in her conduct, was not always circumspect in her language, and too often allowed herself a licence that we can but regret. Her free manners, added to the evident neglect of her husband, contributed to encourage many admirers, and none more so than her cousin Bussy. His life was in its variations always intimately connected with Madame de Sévigné. On both sides there early existed, and it continued in spite of bitter affronts offered by Bussy, a true and sincere affection, a perfect appreciation of each other's merits, a remarkable affinity, not of heart, but of intellect. Madame de Sévigné used to say that Bussy was 'le fagot de son esprit,' and he was worthy to be so.

Soon after his young cousin's marriage, Bussy having made some overtures to her, all his advances, as he himself declares, were met in a playful spirit, and answered with a familiarity authorized by the position in which they stood to each other. Still Bussy was a dangerous wooer. Of his personal advantages we have already spoken: his military career had begun at the age of sixteen, and he early won the most honourable distinctions, being named a colonel at twenty, and at twenty-six a 'Lieutenant de Roi du Nivernais.' He was not only handsome and brave, but was possessed of talents so remarkable, that his literary efforts, singularly brilliant and clear, were destined to open for him the doors of the Academy. To his many gifts he added, what was a great charm in

the eyes of Madame de Sévigné, the name of Rabutin. She herself, the last descendant of the eldest branch of the family, saw in her cousin the man who was to perpetuate and signalize that name. *Rabutinage*, as she terms it, was always a powerful element in her heart: she felt strongly the ties of blood, and made no effort to conceal it.

Bussy being often called away to join the army, was compelled for the time to cease his attentions to Madame de Sévigné, but he never failed to keep himself in her mind by means of letters. In 1646, he writes to her from the camp of Hondscotte a letter, half prose, half verse, in which he informs his fair cousin of his brilliant prowess :—

'To you, madame, who are fond of details, I will give an account of our campaign. To speak more correctly, it is a eulogy of Monsieur le Duc.'

Bussy goes on to describe the junction of the troops, the forced march, and arrives at the siege of Mardick :—

'Ce fut là que pour mon bonheur
L'ennemi rasant la tranchée,
Devant ce prince j'eus l'honneur
De tirer une fois l'épée.
Ce fut en cette occasion
Qu'il fit lui-même une action
Digne d'éternelle mémoire,
Et que m'ayant d'honneur comblé,
Il se déchargea de la gloire
Dont il se trouvait accablé. *

* It was there, the enemy being close to the trenches, I had the good fortune to draw my sword in the presence of the prince. It was also on

'I cannot tell you, my dear cousin, to what extent Monsieur le Duc praised the little I did at this sortie; but what rendered it really important, were the feats he himself accomplished, and the number of dead and wounded among men of quality. All this did me honour, because I commanded.'

After expatiating on the events in which he shared, he ends by saying—

'Je finirais mes récits de combats
Et l'éloge de son altesse,
En vous parlant de ma tendresse,
Si je n'étais un peu trop las.' *

Through many years was Bussy to continue in every way to force his love upon his cousin, notwithstanding in a short period of time he was twice married, and moreover had a number of romantic adventures. The most celebrated of these was his carrying away by force a young and rich widow, Madame de Miramion, whom on account of her wealth he wished to make his wife. The terror, the agony of the unfortunate lady when thus violently torn from her family, the solemn oath she took, ere Bussy could open his lips to justify himself, never to marry him, form an episode of the most dramatic

this occasion that he accomplished an action worthy of everlasting remembrance, and having loaded me with honour he relieved himself of the glory with which he was overburdened.

* I would finish my account of battles and praises of his highness, by speaking of my affection were I not rather tired.

interest. This event happened in the year 1648, but it caused no change whatever in the conduct of Bussy towards his cousin.

Of the rivals of Bussy in his endeavours to win the good graces of Madame de Sévigné, the most important of all, and the man whom her heart, if it ever secretly wavered, inclined for, was the Comte du Lude. Not possessing so many attractions as Bussy, he was nevertheless a great favourite with women. Tall and well made, proficient in every manly accomplishment, tender and passionate, imploring with tears, discreet and considerate, the most trustworthy friend where he ceased to be a lover, he was most formidable to the peace and reputation of a young woman. But Madame de Sévigné seems to have excelled in the difficult art of rejecting the suitor without offending the friend. Her partiality for the Comte du Lude was always great, and with the boldness of a clear conscience she in after years jokes on the subject with her daughter. She has no shame in declaring that her pen—as Madame de Grignan had reproached her —'is always cut to write wonders of the Grand Maître.'* No doubt she owed him a tender recollection, and the thought of him agreeably reminded her of the days of her triumphs.

The Comte de Vassé, the Comte de Montmoron, and the Marquis de Noirmoutier seem also in those

* The Comte du Lude was Grand Master of the Artillery.

early years to have assiduously courted the young marquise. Other admirers she had of a less dangerous kind, but these only contributed by their attentions to enliven and divert her. Ménage, her ancient preceptor, continued his useless declarations. Madame de Sévigné, to show how affectionately she regarded him, and at the same time how unimportant she thought his professed passion, one day kissed him in sisterly way before a circle of men. Seeing the astonishment of the bystanders, she turned her smiling face towards them, and with her ready manner said—'It was thus the Christians kissed in the primitive Church.'

Not more dangerous, and full of pleasantry and amiability, stood the Abbé de St.-Pavin, the neighbour of the Abbé de Coulanges at Livry. This abbé lived a life of pleasure and dissipation: his house was the resort of good society, but his infirmity—he was humpbacked—did not make him a very formidable lover. His pen found some of its best inspirations to address Madame de Sévigné, whom he used to meet every Friday in summer, when she drove from Paris to Livry to spend that day with her 'Bien Bon.' St.-Pavin found so great a charm in the society of our marquise that he exclaims—

'Seigneur, que vos bontés sont grandes
De nous écouter de si haut!
On vous fait diverses demandes;
Seul vous savez ce qu'il nous faut.

Je suis honteux de mes faiblesses.
Pour les honneurs, pour les richesses,
Je vous importunai jadis :
J'y renonce, je le proteste.
Multipliez les vendredis,
Je vous quitte de tout le reste.' *

This charming epistle was not forgotten by Madame de Sévigné, and the day came when, with gentle pride, she recalled that prayer of St.-Pavin, that God would multiply the Fridays.

The Chevalier de Méré was also one of the intimate circle of Madame de Sévigné. He is principally remembered for his extreme fatuity, and the favour he enjoyed with the belles and Précieuses confirmed this overweening opinion of his person. His pedantry and self-satisfaction cannot have been congenial to Madame de Sévigné, and the reputation of the Chevalier de Méré must have been his greatest claim to be tolerated.

Very different from him, pleasant and good-humoured, jovial, indolent, and amusing, was the Abbé de Montreuil, who knew how to administer flattery in the most delicate manner. Having once seen Madame de Sévigné play at Blind Man's Buff, he improvised the following lines :—

'De toutes les façons vous avez droit de plaire,
Mais surtout vous savez nous charmer en ce jour :

* Lord, how great is your mercy from so high to listen to us ! Many are the favours we ask ; you alone know what we need. I am ashamed of my weaknesses : for honours, for riches, I did once importune you. I renounce them. Multiply the Fridays, and I ask nothing more.

Voyant vos yeux bandés, on vous prend pour l'Amour ;
Les voyant découverts, on vous prend pour sa mère.' *

Montreuil wrote letters nearly as well as he turned a couplet. A false rumour having been circulated that Madame de Sévigné had returned to Paris from the Rochers, he addressed to her the following :—

'As your merit cannot allow you to remain long in any place without the news of it being known, there is a report that you are in Paris. I cannot believe it: it is one of the things in this world I most wish for, and consequently it cannot be true. At all hazards I send to inquire whether it be so, that in such case I may cease to be ill. It will not be the first miracle you have accomplished. In your illustrious race they are performed from mother to son. You are aware that Madame de Chantal was extremely addicted to them, and all honest people who see and hear you are of a mind to declare that "Monsieur son fils," who was your father, accomplished a great miracle. I entreat you then, if you are come back, not to keep the knowledge from me, so that I may presently have the pleasure of being in good health, and the honour of seeing you. It is a favour I believe I merit as much as formerly, as I am as giddy and as wild as ever, and continue to say things as much out of place. I am forgetting that if I

* To please is in every way your right, but never more than to-day have you charmed us: seeing your eyes bandaged, we mistake you for Love; seeing them uncovered, we imagine you to be his mother.

be not altered it may not be the same with you, and that instead of the monosyllabic letter I received last year, in which there was "Yes," you may now send me one of the same length, but with "No" instead. But God above all—a sentence I have just found in my almanac when looking for the day of the month. It is the nineteenth.

'I am, with all the gravity and respect of which I am capable (the first is little; the second much),

'Your humble servant,

'MONTREUIL.

'I have omitted to put "Madame" in my letter, and now that you are Lieutenante de Roi de Fougères it is a great fault. Here are three: distribute them as you think best—Madame, madame, madame.'

With the same gaiety as Montreuil, with ready songs and prompt repartees, Marigny—a follower of Retz, a familiar of the Marquis de Sévigné when he married—added to the liveliness of the society of Madame de Sévigné, who appreciated and enjoyed his conversation.

Segrais, a man of the world, an author, young and amiable, openly professed more than friendship for the youthful marquise; but he himself in some pretty lines is forced to acknowledge—

'Mais qu'ai-je fais aussi? Ne savais-je pas bien
Qu'on perd tout avec vous, et qu'on n'y gagne rien?' *

Not only in the *ruelle* of Madame de Sévigné must we picture to ourselves these many suitors striving to win a smile from her fair lips; the 'promenade' was nearly as much as conversation a favourite pastime of the society of the seventeenth century. Whatever may be said to propagate the false idea that a love of Nature was not then prevalent, we think it was hardly ever so genuine. Madame de Rambouillet used to delight in exploring the beautiful environs of Paris —Chantilly, Anet, and Ruel were amongst the favoured spots. In Paris itself, the Cours la Reine, enclosed between the banks of the Seine and the woods of the Champs Elysées, were daily thronged with select crowds. Marie de Médicis, wife of Henri IV, had given her name and put in fashion those noble avenues; Louis XIII adding many improvements. When coming from the Tuileries the road was through the Porte de la Conférence, then old and falling to ruins. The king built a new and magnificent gate; at the same time the dark drives were more opened, while the character of rusticity was still retained. There being no embankments, the view of the glittering river could be fully enjoyed. Every afternoon ladies went in open chariots to breathe the fresh air

* But what have I done? Do I not well know that with you all is lost and nothing gained?

and to show off to advantage their beauty and dress. The men, magnificently mounted, and in all the splendour their attire then admitted, pranced at the carriage doors, flying from one to another. The drive lasted late into the evening, and many were the soft words then spoken.

Mademoiselle de Scudéry is again the faithful historian who describes the Cours la Reine. Writing in 1650, she says—

'Hermogène, who knew all the avenues of Suze, [Paris], so managed that they should arrive on the most favourable side, that on which is to be observed one of the most beautiful sights to charm the eye. In approaching Suze by this spot, an eminence is reached, whence is plainly to be seen a large prairie of more than a hundred stades, through which runs the River Choaspe [Seine], whose waters are so sweet that they cannot be equalled by those of the purest and freshest fountains. On the banks of this river stands the town of Suze, its magnificent palaces causing it to appear as beautiful when viewed from the outside as from within.

'On the side to which Hermogène conducted Belisis, on the banks of the lovely river, are to be found four large avenues, so large, so broad, and so shaded by the thick foliage of the trees which form them, that it is impossible to imagine a more delightful drive. This is the spot where, in small open chariots, the ladies all drive to of an evening. The men follow on horseback, and

having the liberty to go from one to another, this resort is at once *promenade* and *conversation*, and no doubt very diverting. . . . They saw those large drives crowded with small painted and gilded chariots, in which were seated the most beautiful ladies of Suze, amongst whom a number of men of quality, admirably mounted and splendidly dressed, went and came, bowing to them.' *

In this description there exists a singular similarity to what a writer of the present day might say of the Champs Elysées or the Bois de Boulogue. In some respects the lapse of two centuries has not altered the picture of Mademoiselle de Scudéry, and the substitution of a few words would adapt it to our day.

* 'Artamène, ou le Grand Cyrus.'

## CHAPTER VII.

1648.

Birth of Charles de Sévigné.—Correspondence with Bussy.—Commencement of civil strife.—Arrest of Broussel.—Intercession of Gondi.—Portrait of Anne of Austria.

IN the early part of the year 1648, Madame de Sévigné was again at the Rochers, and there her son Charles de Sévigné was born. Shortly after this happy event she writes a proud and joyful letter to Bussy, at that time with the army :—

'Des Rochers, March 15, 1648.

'I find you a pleasant coxcomb not to have written to me for two months. Have you forgotten who I am, and the rank I hold in the family? Truly, little cadet, I shall remind you of it, and if you anger me I shall reduce you to the *lambel.** You knew that I was about to be confined, and you feel no more anxiety about my health than if I were still a girl. Learn then, even if it is to enrage you, that I am the mother of a son, into whom I shall instil with his milk a hatred of yourself. I shall have many more, simply that they

* A charge placed in a coat of arms to indicate the younger branch.

may become your enemies. You have not been clever enough to do as much, you father of daughters!

'But this is concealing my friendship long enough, my dear cousin. Nature is more powerful than policy. I had resolved to scold you all through my letter for your laziness, but it causes me too great an effort, and I must end by saying, that Monsieur de Sévigné and I esteem you highly, and often speak of the pleasure there would be in being with you.'

Bussy replied immediately:—

'April 12, 1648.

'To answer your letter of the 15th of March, I shall tell you first, madame, that I perceive you adopt a certain habit of lecturing me which savours more of the mistress than the cousin. Beware of what you engage in, for when I once resolve to suffer I shall expect to have the favours as well as the rebuffs of a lover. I know you are the head of the family, and I owe you deference in this respect; but you presume on my submission a little too much. It is true you are as prompt to be appeased as to be angry, and if your letters begin by "I find you are a pleasant coxcomb," they make amends by ending with, "We esteem you highly, Monsieur de Sévigné and I."'

He goes on to congratulate his cousin on the birth of her son, and to acknowledge his deep regret at not having one himself. His first wife, Gabrielle de Toulongeon

—like Madame de Sévigné, a granddaughter of Sainte Chantal—had borne him two daughters only. It was at this time that Bussy, eager to contract a second marriage which would augment his fortune and perhaps realize his hope of seeing an heir to his name, rashly attempted to carry off Madame de Miramion, and failed as we have said, covered with shame and ridicule. Madame de Sévigné was in Brittany when the occurrence took place, and it was only in the autumn of this year, at her uncle's—Jacques de Neuchèze, Bishop of Chalon—at his abbey of Ferrières, where she and Monsieur de Sévigné were on a visit, that she had the opportunity of meeting her cousin. He was then by every effort striving to atone for his conduct and appease the just anger of Madame de Miramion's family, and in consequence remained only a few days in the company of Madame de Sévigné. No sooner was he in Paris, than taking up that pen he could handle so gracefully, he wrote a letter, not to the wife, but to the husband and wife. He was then ingratiating himself with Monsieur de Sévigné, and becoming his confidant in order that he might the more readily have access to his cousin. Of right principles Bussy was entirely free, and he pursued his course at all times unimpeded by honour, generosity, or delicacy.

Soon after this, Monsieur and Madame de Sévigné returned to Paris, where we find them at the commencement of the year 1649.

It is impossible to mention this date without a

pause. Already the prosperous course of the first years of the regency was being interrupted by civil strife. The queen—of whom courtiers used to say, when first she gathered the reins of power into her hands, 'The queen is so good'—was showing herself authoritative, and a more than jealous guardian of every privilege of royalty. In her discussions with the parliament, haughty and arrogant, she tolerated no mediation. The victory of Condé at Lens, on the 20th of August, 1648, had given new prestige and authority to the queen. She imagined herself powerful enough to speak and act without restraint, and then the conflict commenced. It began with the arrest of Broussel,* an idol of the people, venerable and virtuous, who was seized in the midst of his family, and the screams of whose servants soon brought together a clamorous multitude calling loudly for his liberation. This mob was met by Gondi, Coadjuteur of Paris, that singular and dramatic personage, who was to play so important a part in coming events. This man, at once capable of every vice and every virtue, was remarkably ugly, even deformed, but with eyes so full of fire, insolence, and wit, that few women withstood his fascinations. He was then the most popular man in Paris; and this can readily be conceived, as he himself declares that in a very short period he had spent more than thirty-six thousand écus (8,640*l.*) in gratuities. In his ecclesiastical robes he now appeared

* A councillor in the Upper Chamber.

before his flock, and took upon himself to go and speak to the queen. When admitted to her presence, he declared to her, in the most moderate language, that the only means of quieting the rising tumult was to set Broussel free. On hearing this, the queen flushed angrily, and with her hands close to the face of the coadjuteur exclaimed—'Rather than give him his liberty, I will strangle him with these hands; and those who . . . .' At this moment Mazarin approached her, and speaking a few words in her ear, she paused and composed herself; and adds the coadjuteur in his memoirs—'If I had not known her, I should have thought her extremely softened.'

This will perhaps be an opportune moment to transcribe from Madame de Motteville, the faithful historian of the queen, the picture she has left of her mistress:—

'She is tall and well made, and her demeanour, soft and majestic, never fails to inspire love and respect. She has been one of the greatest beauties of her day, and even now [1658] enough of it remains to eclipse many who are young and have pretensions to beauty. Her eyes are handsome; the gentle and serious blend themselves agreeably in her looks, whose power has been fatal to many illustrious subjects, and whole nations have experienced what empire they have over men. Her mouth, though more innocently, has been an accomplice in all the woes she has caused: it is small and rosy, and Nature has been liberal of

all the charms which can contribute to make it perfect. By one of her smiles she can win a thousand hearts: even her enemies cannot withstand her fascinations. We have known many, whom ambition had deprived of their better judgment, own that the queen forced herself on their affection even when they were most inclined to fail in their duty towards her. Her hair, which she has in great profusion, is fine, and of a light auburn; there is nothing more agreeable than to see it being dressed. Her hands, which all Europe has praised, are made to please, the eyes, to carry a sceptre, and to be admired. They unite a perfect whiteness with extreme handiness; so much so that people are always enchanted when this great queen shows them, either at her toilet or at her table.

'Her bosom is well shaped, and those who love to behold what is beautiful would have reason to murmur at the care the queen takes to hide it, if the motive which prompts her to act did not command their esteem. Her skin is of a delicacy and whiteness which can never be sufficiently praised. Her complexion is not equal to the rest, and the little care she takes to preserve it—never wearing a mask—does not contribute to improve it. Her nose is not as perfect as her other features; it is large: but her eyes being large also, it does not ill become her; and if it deprives her face of some beauty, it adds to its gravity.

'To resume, the whole of her person is deserving of commendation, but I fear to offend her modesty

and mine if I say more: this is why I dare not add, that her foot is remarkably small and well formed.'

The foregoing portrait of Anne of Austria was penned by one who, if perfectly sincere, was blinded by an affectionate partiality.

St.-Simon in after years, speaking of the grace and dignity with which this queen held her court, states that 'she excelled in the difficult art of observing the rank of each and yet offending none.' Louis XIV in his halcyon days remembered with regret and envy the court of his mother, and in vain he tried to persuade his queen, Marie-Thérèse, and the first dauphine of Bavaria to emulate her.

The gentleness, however, of Anne of Austria did not hinder her from giving way to the most violent fits of passion, and from carrying the throne of her son to the brink of ruin—the events we shall now recall testifying to her rashness and impetuosity.

We have left Broussel a prisoner and the regent resisting every entreaty to give him his liberty: the people, however, were to have their will.

## CHAPTER VIII.

1648–50.

Journée des Barricades.—Flight of the queen.—Suspension of hostilities.—Arrest of the princes.—They are liberated by Mazarin.

At daybreak on the 27th of August, 1648, twelve hundred barricades suddenly appeared in the streets of Paris. A woman of the people beat the drum to call the insurgents to arms. In spite of her anger, in spite of her threats, Anne was forced to yield: she feared for Mazarin the fate of Strafford—and Broussel was free. That the fire was not extinguished the queen knew, and on the 6th of January, 1649, she fled with the boy king at three in the morning from Paris to St.-Germain. From that hour the siege of Paris began.

Madame de Sévigné and her husband, by their relationship to Gondi, the very soul of the Fronde, found themselves of the party opposed to the court; Bussy, who was attached to the Prince de Condé, was with the besieging army, and again separated from his cousin. Monsieur de Sévigné had joined the Duc de Longueville, who was in Normandy striving to raise that province against the king. His beautiful

duchess remained in Paris, and within the walls of the Hôtel de Ville the young 'Paris de Longueville' came into the world. Among the fair Frondeuses Madame de Longueville rallied round her was Madame de Sévigné; but then, as ever, her good sense, her gentleness, her true love of her country, made her deplore the war which was arming men against their fellow-countrymen. Bussy, who commanded the chevau-légers of the Prince de Condé, was at St.-Denis, and thence he wrote to his cousin:—

'St.-Denis, February 5, 1649.

'I have long hesitated to write to you, not knowing whether you were become my enemy, or were still my good cousin; whether I must despatch to you a footman or a trumpeter. But remembering to have heard you blame the brutality of Horace, who refused to recognize his brother-in-law after war had been declared between their republics, I have thought that the interests of your party will not prevent you reading my letters; and as for me, except in what concerns the king's service, I am your very humble servant.'

Madame de Sévigné in Paris was ready and willing to serve her cousin, except in what concerned the interest of her party, as he was her humble servant except in what concerned the king's service. Bussy had been trying to get his carriage horses out of the

town, claiming them in the name of his uncle, Hugues de Rabutin, Grand Prieur of the Temple, and Madame de Sévigné had used her influence for him on this occasion without success, for they were eventually seized. Bussy, however, for the loss he sustained, consoled himself with the proofs of affection his cousin had given him.

On the 11th of March the queen and the parliament signed a truce, which enabled the officers of the besieging army to re-enter Paris, but not without danger —Mazarin was so detested that the cry 'Au Mazarin!' was sufficient to place any one in great peril. On entering Paris, we may suppose urged by a desire to see Madame de Sévigné, Bussy had been requested by the officer on duty to produce a pass from the Maréchal Duplessy. Bussy declared that he had none, and that none was needed. High words followed, and soon Bussy found himself surrounded by an angry multitude. In the turmoil which ensued he received a violent blow on the head, and whilst in a *corps de garde*, where he took refuge with his companions, loud threats of death met his ears. His audacity in answering a man who was abusing the king, in cleverly blaming the minister whilst upholding the monarch, turned the tide in his favour, and he was able to reach in safety the house of the grand prieur.

He did not long enjoy the privilege of seeing his cousin; the Prince de Condé had now taken a dislike to Bussy, and was anxious that he should sell his commis-

sion to the Comte de Guitaut. The proud Rabutin, however, was not a man to defer to the wishes of the prince when he fancied them contrary to his interest and to justice, and peremptorily refused what was demanded of him. It was not in the power of Condé to enforce his desires, but he had the power to order Bussy into active service. He was therefore required to quit Paris and join his company in Flanders. To this order he angrily submitted.

Madame de Sévigné had not witnessed the dissensions which tore the capital without experiencing a just horror of the fratricidal conflict. When so many were blinded by love or ambition, she, though faithful to the side her relations had espoused, writes thus to Monsieur Lenet her reprobation of what was taking place:—

'Monsieur,—You must allow me to wish for peace, for with your permission I think an hour's conversation worth fifty letters. When you are here, and I have the honour of seeing you, I shall force you to own with me that war is a foolish amusement. I ardently desire to see it ended, and also to experience a continuance of your friendship, which I hold in particular esteem, and am, monsieur,

'Your very humble and obedient servant,

'M. DE RABUTIN-CHANTAL.

'Paris, March 25.'

Little did Madame de Sévigné imagine the events which were yet to happen, and how much French blood was still to be shed, how much misery brought about by the blindness and arrogance of all. Condé, the hero, the demi-god, was growing every day more insolent and overbearing. He now insults Anne as a woman and as a queen. A gentleman of the name of Jarzé, attached to Condé's household, had the audacity to importune the queen with declarations of love, when she proudly and disdainfully, before her whole court, brought home to him his insolence and forbade him her presence. But Condé, braving his sovereign's verdict, interferes imperiously, and leading Jarzé by the hand, forces the queen to receive him. She submits, but inwardly vows revenge, and sets about to prepare it from that hour. She meditated no less than the arrest of Condé and his brother Conti, and that of the husband of their sister, the Duc de Longueville. On the 18th of January, 1650, the plan was put in execution.

Unsuspecting and confident the three princes arrived to take their places at the council, while the queen, under the pretext of indisposition, had retired to bed. At her side, anxiously inquiring respecting her health, sat Madame la Princesse, strong in the grandeur of her house and the great services of her son. He, before taking his place at the council board, is admitted to the presence of the queen, and after a few seconds' conversation leaves her to meet his fate. No

sooner were the three princes together in one room, than the captain of the guard approaches Condé to announce his orders. The prince received them with undisturbed equanimity, and with the other princes suffered himself to be led without resistance to Vincennes. While this was taking place the devout queen, having repaired to her oratory, was praying with the boy king for the success of an enterprise which was to cause new miseries to France.

In Paris the fickle populace, now destroying what they had before worshipped, lit bonfires in exultation over the captivity of the hero of Rocroy. Though a prisoner, Condé was still powerful: if men and courtiers abandoned him, women remained faithful. His lovely sister, insulted in the person of her brothers and her husband, carried away by ambition and a desire for renown, once more attempts to continue a war against the crown. Notwithstanding she is unsuccessful in Normandy, she still perseveres. Disguised in man's attire, she embarked in a small vessel, and arrived in the Netherlands throws herself into Stenay, where with such a lieutenant as Turenne she looks forward to victories. But the star of the cardinal was in the ascendant, and Turenne was defeated at Rethel (Dec. 15, 1650).

A more efficient auxiliary was to be the young Princesse de Condé. Despised and neglected by her husband, she shows an energy and fortitude which surprises every one. Taking her young son, Enghien,

she flies from Chantilly to Montrond, and from Montrond to Bordeaux. There this woman of two and twenty, robed in mourning, and holding her child in her arms, excites the inhabitants to the highest pitch of enthusiasm; the hatred of Mazarin alone was sufficient to urge resistance to the queen.

Montrond, one of the strongholds of the Condés, was to gather within its walls many of the prince's partizans. Bussy, who served under the prince, but without any attachment to him, had lingered in Paris, not wishing to take a part in this new Fronde; but a private letter from the Princesse de Condé forced him against his will to repair to Montrond. The Duc de la Rochefoucauld and the Duc de Bouillon were preparing for a siege, and from these scenes of warfare Bussy writes to Madame de Sévigné, who, in Paris, and still faithful to the cause which Gondi embraced, found herself with the court and against her cousin:—

'Camp of Montrond, July 2, 1650.

'I have at last, my fair cousin, declared myself for Monsieur le Prince: it has not been without great reluctance, as against my king I am serving a prince who does not care for me. True, the position he is in inspires me with compassion. I shall therefore serve him while a prisoner as if he loved me, and if ever he is free, I shall return him my commission and quit him immediately to go back to my duty.

'What say you to such sentiments, madame? Let

me know, I pray you, if you do not esteem them great and noble. Let us write often to each other; the cardinal will know nought of it, and were he to discover it, and give you a "lettre de cachet," remember it is glorious for a woman of twenty to be mixed up in affairs of state. The celebrated Madame de Chevreuse did not begin earlier. As for myself, I would willingly cause you to commit a crime of whatsoever nature. When I think that last year we were on different sides, and that we are so still, although we have both changed, I conclude that we are playing at prison-bars. But your side is always the best, as you never leave Paris, while I go from St.-Denis to Montrond, and from Montrond I fear I shall end by going to the devil.'

'For news I shall tell you that I have just defeated the regiment of St.-Aignan; but if the "mestre-de-camp" had been there in person I should not have done it so cheaply.

'Monsieur de Launay-Lyais will tell you the life we lead. He is a man of merit, and for that reason I shall serve him willingly; but the most powerful of all is, because you like him, and I believe I shall be pleasing you.

'Adieu, my fair cousin.'

The Launay-Lyais to whom reference is thus made by Bussy, and who was the bearer of the letter, was a Breton gentleman whom Madame de Sévigné had recommended to her cousin, and whom he was serving

in the hope of advancing himself in her good graces.

The Prince de Condé, in whose cause Bussy was enlisted against his better sense, had been, with his illustrious companions in captivity, transferred from Vincennes to Hâvre, and Fortune seemed to be smiling on Giulio Mazarini. The queen, enraptured after success, mad with joy at the victory of Rethel, is again by her arrogance doing her best to turn the tide; the parliament, insulted by Mazarin, lifts up its head; Retz, who had for some time acted with the court, is reconciled to the friends of Condé; a wish for peace was being felt, and negotiations were opened, in which the coadjuteur, before all things, stipulated that Mademoiselle de Chevreuse should become a princess of the blood by a marriage with Conti. Mazarin all at once finds the earth slipping under his feet; from all-powerful he becomes terrified, and flies from the Palais Royal in the night of the 6th of January, 1651. With all speed he hastens to Hâvre to set the princes at large: he wishes still to appear as though acting by his own free will, but they well know it is under compulsion.

Condé, with the new halo of captivity on his victorious brow, returns to Paris to find himself in the ascendant. He is advised to put aside the queen and declare himself regent. Mazarin gone, Mazarin defeated, who except the first prince of the blood should take his place and govern the state? But fortunately for Anne of Austria, as Condé had entered the dungeon

of Vincennes, so he came out of the fortress of Hâvre —proud, arrogant, and, except on the battle-field, devoid of any capacity. He declares that his brother is not to marry Mademoiselle de Chevreuse, and he pays men to insult her and her mother in the streets. Retz steps forward to revenge this indignity; Condé and Conti find themselves surrounded in the parliament by armed men, the creatures of the cardinal,* when a massacre might have followed the slightest provocation: the two Bourbons bow as they pass before the two Lorraines,† who in the galleries were triumphantly enjoying their revenge.

The queen, still hating Condé, is courting Retz once again. In the night, disguised as a cavalier, with feathers in his hat and a sword at his side, he is admitted into the Palais Royal; in the day, clothed in purple, at Notre Dame he preaches peace and Christian charity.

During the eventful year 1650 Madame de Sévigné's life was embittered by humiliations and sorrows, with which, leaving the great actors whose influence was felt by her also, we shall now occupy ourselves for a time.

* Retz had recently been made a cardinal.

† Madame de Chevreuse and her daughter.

# CHAPTER IX.

1650-1.

Monsieur de Sévigné is enamoured of Ninon de Lenclos.—Her character.—Bussy's intercepted letter.—Monsieur de Sévigné's passion for Madame de Gondran.—Duel with the Chevalier d'Albret.

We have said before, that very soon after her marriage, Madame de Sévigné had reason to complain of her husband. In spite of her beauty, her intelligence, her virtue, Monsieur de Sévigné loved on all sides, but never one so amiable as his wife. He was not an 'honnête homme,' as the term went: he ruined his young wife and caused her much grief. It was this conduct of the Marquis de Sévigné which emboldened the admirers of the youthful marquise.

Madame de Sévigné had borne with patience the infidelities of her husband, maintaining for herself the same strict line of virtuous duty; but in 1650 she had to submit to an affront which surpassed all former experiences, and wellnigh mastered her patience—from Bussy she learnt that Monsieur de Sévigné was the favoured lover of Ninon de Lenclos. This woman has acted a part so singular that it will be necessary here to give a more lengthened notice of her. By a

remarkable fatality she became, as it were, the evil genius of Madame de Sévigné, being loved by three generations of men on whom a pure and noble woman had the greatest claims for affection. In youth, the husband, then the son, and years afterwards the grandson of Madame de Sévigné all fell under the fascination of one over whom Time seemed to have no power.

Mademoiselle de Lenclos was well, and even nobly born. At fifteen, bereft of both parents, she was mistress of herself and fortune, and began that career of systematic dissipation which she pursued for so many years. Soon she lost her place in the society of women pretending to any outward decency, and when her indiscretions became public, she remained surrounded by a host of lovers and friends who all equally worshipped her. Her beauty was brilliant, and her mind equal to it. She had the virtues of men—firmness, friendship, perfect disinterestedness, and in their sense strict honour. No woman was more dangerous; no woman could be more seductive. Born in 1616, she was ten years older than Madame de Sévigné, and in 1650, at the age of thirty-four, was in the fulness of her prime.

There are three periods, each perfectly distinct, in the career of Ninon—the first, when she goes by that name, and knows no restraint; the second, when, arrived at mature age, she is still feared for her dangerous seductions, blamed for her declared incre-

dulity, but esteemed for the solid qualities which are in her—she is then Ninon de Lenclos; the third is in old age, when, in the full possession of her elevated reason, she becomes her real self, and is Mademoiselle de Lenclos, admitted into the company of women belonging to the first society.

To pursue a career so completely without parallel it is easy to conceive that the powers of Ninon must have been of no mean kind. She swayed a host, and swayed them all despotically. By the few women who in her youth surrounded her, among whom was Madame Scarron—the future Madame de Maintenon—she was always cherished.

Such was the rival for whom Madame de Sévigné learnt that she was neglected. When Bussy disclosed this new infidelity of her husband, her sorrow and anger were indeed great, and she expressed her feelings without restraint to her cousin, who, though consoling her, and striving to avail himself of the disposition he saw in her, had so ingratiated himself with Monsieur de Sévigné as to be the chosen confidant of his passion for Ninon. But even to Bussy such double-dealing was of no avail. Madame de Sévigné, unable to conceal her grief, and loving her husband, unworthy as he was, could not restrain herself from hinting to him what she had learned. He was not long conjecturing who was his wife's informant, and the very next day, at the Cours la Reine, he reproached Bussy for his indiscretion. Bussy, nothing daunted, felt no

scruple in assuring him that he had kept his promise of silence, and that Madame de Sévigné had simply guessed the state of affairs. Then, having satisfied himself that he had quieted the suspicions of the Marquis de Sévigné, Bussy hastened to write the following letter to his cousin:—

'I was not wrong yesterday, madame, when I suspected your prudence. You have spoken to your husband of what I had told you. You must perceive that it is not on my account that I reproach you thus. The worst that can happen to me is to lose his friendship; but you have more to fear. I have, however, been fortunate enough to disabuse him; but he is so persuaded that it is impossible to remain "honnête homme" without being always in love, that I despair of you ever being happy if you aspire to be loved by him only. Let not this alarm you, madame; as I have begun to serve you, I shall not abandon you now. You are aware that jealousy is often more efficient to retain a heart than beauty and merit. I advise you to make your husband jealous, my fair cousin, and for this purpose I offer myself to you. If you bring him back by these means, I have enough affection for you to return to my first part, of being your agent with him, and sacrifice myself again to make you happy. And if you must lose him, love me, my cousin, and I shall aid you to take your revenge by loving you all your life.'

Bussy intrusted this letter to a page, who, taking it

at an early hour, arrived before Madame de Sévigné was awake. Whilst waiting to deliver the letter, Monsieur de Sévigné appeared, and being informed that the missive was for his wife, he opened it, and after reading it dismissed the page, telling him there was no answer. When the unsuspecting messenger returned, the fury and despair of Bussy knew no bounds. He declares that he felt inclined to kill the page: all his wiles, his patience, his perseverance were about to prove useless. The very same day, as he expected, the Marquise de Sévigné wrote to make known to him the commands of her husband, which forbad him her house. She further advised him to have patience, when all would soon blow over. It was shortly after this that Bussy married Mademoiselle de Rouville, and a fortnight later went to Montrond, whence, as we have seen, he wrote to his cousin in the usual terms of gallant familiarity.

If Monsieur de Sévigné was inconstant and fickle, the lovely Ninon, who was causing so much pain to our marquise, was no less so. 'Three months were for her three centuries,' and he who was for a time envied, found himself very soon forced to relinquish a position he had perhaps acquired only after the entreaties of years. For a short period only did Monsieur de Sévigné have it in his power to boast, as he had done to Bussy. The scandal remained, but Ninon loved another—Rambouillet de la Sablière took the place of Henri de Sévigné.

The one charming woman who had every claim and every right did not profit by this event, which perhaps she at first hoped might prove fortunate for her. In vain was she ready for every sacrifice, and when, after long resistance on her part, the wise counsels of the Abbé de Coulanges were acted upon, and Madame de Sévigné's fortune put out of her husband's reach, in the hour of need she came generously forward to help him. Sévigné in requital could only declare, that 'for others she might be the most agreeable woman in the world, but that he could not love her.' Wishing to rid himself of even the slight restraint her presence imposed upon him, he took her again to the Rochers, himself hastening to return to Paris, where another intrigue was awaiting him.

After his separation from Ninon, Sévigné conceived a violent passion for Madame de Gondran, who for her beauty and gallantry had acquired a certain reputation. She was married to a man whose only merit was his large fortune; and his wife covered him with ridicule, which his stupidity and coarseness only made the more easy. For Madame de Gondran, Monsieur de Sévigné lavishly expended larger sums of money than he had ever done before; nothing would satisfy her. The empire she obtained over his weak disposition was so complete, that hearing her express a wish to wear a matchless pair of diamond ear-rings which belonged to Mademoiselle de Chevreuse, Sévigné did not scruple to solicit the loan of them from her, using the name of

Mademoiselle de la Vergne. The jewels were readily lent, and Madame de Gondran the same evening boldly exhibited them. Sévigné, to repair this mischief, and to silence the general astonishment which the sight of Mademoiselle de Chevreuse's well-known diamonds in the possession of Madame de Gondran had excited, was obliged to entreat Mademoiselle de la Vergne to confirm his false assertion, and assume the responsibility of the loan.

Madame de Gondran, who was by birth and connection simply a *bourgeoise*, became so infatuated by the attentions of Monsieur de Sévigné, that she did not conceal the disdain she felt for all who were not noble and titled, and was never weary of exalting the merit and wit of 'les gens de la cour.' This insolent behaviour provoked in many who had been formerly honoured with Madame de Gondran's good graces a desire to repay her arrogance. Accordingly the Abbé de Romilly, who had been one of her admirers, forgot himself so far as to speak of her in the most offensive terms, and this in the presence of her husband. The particulars of this strange scene reached Monsieur de Sévigné, and in his fury he proposed to publicly chastise Lacger, the person who had spread abroad the words of the Abbé de Romilly. This was avoided only by the precautions Lacger took not to show himself. But the anxiety which a rumour of these events caused Madame de Sévigné in Brittany was only premature; a few days later and the indiscretions of Ma-

dame de Gondran were to give rise to the duel in which the Marquis de Sévigné lost his life.

Whilst Madame de Gondran was receiving from Monsieur de Sévigné that homage so flattering to her pride and vanity, the Chevalier d'Albret, also young and charming, became enamoured of her and paid her some attentions. They were not, however, well received, and four times in succession did Madame de Gondran refuse him her house. The Chevalier d'Albret knew at whose instigation this was done, and felt the slight deeply. At this juncture, Lacger, whom the Marquis de Sévigné had promised to treat so severely, and who was in hiding, and burning to repay the injury he had received, spread a report that Monsieur de Sévigné had been speaking of the Chevalier d'Albret in terms damaging to his honour. The Marquis de Soyecour, a friend of the Chevalier d'Albret, was commissioned by the latter to inquire of the Marquis de Sévigné if it were true that he had used the words imputed to him. Sévigné denied positively having done so; adding, moreover, that he was not trying to justify himself, being in the habit of doing that only sword in hand. As both rivals were equally eager to fight, a meeting was arranged, and on Friday, the 4th of February, 1651, at noon, the encounter took place.

When the two adversaries found themselves face to face, the Marquis de Sévigné repeated his previous assertions, and he and the chevalier then embraced. This, however, did not shake their determination, and

the combat began. After a few seconds Monsieur de Sévigné accidentally fell on the sword of his antagonist, receiving a wound which was immediately declared to be fatal. He lingered long enough, however, to be taken to his house, where he expired two days after at the age of thirty-two, having ill spent the few years allotted to him.

# CHAPTER X.

1651–4.

Death of Monsieur de Sévigné.—Madame de Sévigné returns to Paris.—Habits of society.—Dispute between the Duc de Rohan and the Marquis de Tonquedec.—Bussy's *fête* in the Jardins du Temple.—Madame de Sévigné's admirers: Fouquet; Turenne; Conti.—Correspondence with Bussy.

THE grief of Madame de Sévigné at the loss of a husband whom, in spite of the sorrows he had caused her, she sincerely loved, was great and sincere. She hastened to Paris when the fatal news reached her, but arrived too late to see her husband alive. Except by his wife, and by the unhappy and despicable Monsieur de Gondran, who shed tears at the death of a man he loved but ought to have hated, Monsieur de Sévigné died unregretted, passing out of the world unpitied and unmourned. With some amiable qualities—otherwise a woman so gifted as his wife could not have bestowed on him her affections—he had those minor faults which most interfere in the pleasantness of social intercourse.

At the age of twenty-five, by the death of Monsieur de Sévigné, his young wife found herself in the most

sad and dangerous position in which a woman can be placed. Madame de Sévigné was beautiful and amiable; she had a loving heart, a happy disposition, and a keen sense of the enjoyment of life and of the pleasures it may at times bestow: all seemed calculated to surround her with perils and temptations, and to render well-nigh impossible the accomplishment of the resolution she had taken. We do not doubt that it was during those nine months of solitude and regret which Madame de Sévigné spent at the Rochers immediately after her bereavement, that she embraced that holy vocation of perpetual widowhood and devoted maternity which, to her glory and honour, she adhered to without variation.

It may seem to some that Madame de Sévigné could not really grieve for her husband. We think she grieved, not at what he had been, but at his not being what he might have been. What greater pang, what deeper sorrow can fill the heart of a woman in whom duty is sacred, than feeling that her youth, her heart, her affection, are bestowed and lost on one who is unworthy? How great must have been the regrets of Madame de Sévigné when she felt that, deserving of all respect, she was insulted; hoping for happiness, she reached it not! It was in that solemn pause in her lifetime, when free and allowed to look forward again, that the greatness of her soul displayed itself. She loved her two children with an affection so perfect and so enlightened, that she would not blind herself to

suppose that if she were once happy they might be equally so. She understood and foresaw that in a second marriage, which might atone for the first, the children born of a more felicitous union must rob those to whom she had first given life of some share of her heart and affection. For them she sacrificed her brilliant youth, and giving up hope for self, and accepting as inevitable and ordained for her welfare the dispensations of that Divine Providence to whose influence she submitted, she turned her thoughts to the future, to the happiness, to the rearing of her son, and of that daughter to whom one day she was to write—'I do not know from what you have preserved me, but if it were from fire and water I could not love you more than I do.' Her children were indeed her guardian angels, and for them she acquired, and to them she owed, that virtue which no breath ever sullied, and which no self-satisfaction ever rendered proud. Hers was the simplicity of perfect security; it was as true courage, which never boasts, but never fears.

Madame de Sévigné, in the new life which was to begin for her, had recourse for aid and assistance to her kind guardian, the Abbé de Coulanges. He it was who helped to re-establish her fortune, and to restore order where Monsieur de Sévigné had sown confusion. From that time, for the remainder of his life, the 'Bien Bon' took in hand the care of the affairs of his niece, and she did not undervalue the obligations she owed him.

At the end of the year 1651, Madame de Sévigné returned to Paris, and Loret, the gazetteer, who celebrated in verse all the events of note in the polite world, speaks thus of her arrival:—

'Sévigné, veuve jeune et belle,
Comme une chaste tourterelle,
Ayant d'un cœur triste et marri
Lamenté monsieur son mari,
Est de retour de la campagne,
C'est-à-dire de la Bretagne;
Et, malgré ses sombres atours
Qui semblent ternir ses beaux jours,
Vient augmenter dans nos ruelles
L'agréable nombre des belles.' *

Madame de Sévigné, her mourning over, found herself once more surrounded by her many friends. If she had before been sought and courted, her new position only added to the interest she excited, and gave fresh zeal and fresh hopes to those who sighed for her. She resumed her place in the gay and polished circles she frequented. MADEMOISELLE, daughter of MONSIEUR, brother of Louis XIII, was then occupying the Tuileries, where she was in the habit of giving the most brilliant entertainments: there Madame de Sévigné often shone. She was faithful still to the society of the Fronde: she knew

* Sévigné, a young and beautiful widow, having, like a chaste turtle-dove, with a sad and forlorn heart mourned for her noble husband, has now returned from the country, that is, from Brittany; and in spite of the dark robes, which appear to obscure the brightness of her days, has come to swell in our *ruelles* the agreeable host of the fair.

intimately the Duchesse de Chevreuse and the Duchesse de Châtillon (daughter of Montmorency Bouteville, the friend of Rabutin-Chantal), who was now a splendid and proud beauty, the adored divinity of Condé. Madame Renaud de Sévigné, the aunt of our marquise, and the mother of her chosen friend. Mademoiselle de la Vergne (soon to become Madame de la Fayette), also gathered at her house a choice company. Another aunt of Madame de Sévigné, the sister of her mother, Henriette de Coulanges, Marquise de la Trousse, was then, as she ever remained, a kind and valued friend. Madame de Sévigné visited too the great Sapho, Mademoiselle de Scudéry, whose *ruelle* was, as that of Madame de Rambouillet, though not on so brilliant and transcendant a scale, the resort of those who had any pretensions to wit and talent.

At no period did there exist a greater love of pleasure and dissipation than during that to which we now refer. As in 1793, prisoners condemned to die spent their last hours in amusement, so in the previous century, when the state was convulsed, when every day was bringing fresh complications, when intrigues were rife, when ambition, vanity, and revenge moved and swayed so many hearts, there existed a wish to forget all those turbulent scenes in brilliant and enticing pleasures. If in the provinces the misery was great; if old men, women, and children were dying of hunger by hun-

dreds; if devastation laid waste provinces rich and fruitful; if the drinking-songs of soldiers were heard in the invaded cloisters of the nuns; if their peaceful abodes were turned into scenes of debauch, in Paris, all was smiling: the queen, the court, the nobility all united to ignore the woes they were causing.

Madame de Sévigné, the very year of her return to Paris, found herself, through an incident of which she was the heroine, brought before the public, and made the object of general conversation. Amongst those who were at that time endeavouring to obtain her favour—Bussy was then in Nivernais, in the exercise of his office as Lieutenant of the King—were the Duc de Rohan and the Marquis de Tonquedec, the latter a Breton nobleman. Rohan was that Chabot whose good looks, grace as a dancer, and amiability, had won the heart of the proudest heiress of France—Mademoiselle de Rohan; she who had disdained princes, like the Comte de Soissons; and conquerors, like the Duc de Weimar. To young Chabot, Mademoiselle de Rohan gave her heart, and soon, in spite of the violent opposition of her duchess mother, her hand. The queen, to win the Rohans to the Church, promised to confer on Chabot the name and dukedom of his bride, in exchange for a promise to bring up their children in the Catholic faith. This was done, and from a simple and rather obscure gentleman, Chabot, now Duc de Rohan, became the equal of the greatest in the land. He frequented assiduously the

house of Madame de Sévigné, but being a married man he received from the young marquise only the coquettish welcome she knew not how to refuse to an admirer.

The Marquis de Tonquedec was also a brilliant cavalier, and attached to the court party. He found himself for that reason in opposition to the Duc de Rohan, who was a Frondeur supporting the princes; but in truth their great rivalry was, their equal and extreme desire to be distinguished by Madame de Sévigné.

One afternoon, a Tuesday in June, 1652, the Duc de Rohan coming to pay a visit to Madame de Sévigné, found the Marquis de Tonquedec sitting in her *ruelle*, in the seat of honour—an arm-chair at the head of the bed. On seeing the duc he rose and bowed, and then resumed his seat. The visit of the Duc de Rohan was short and silent: he hurried away and went to report to his proud duchesse the affront he considered he had received. She, indignant, urged him to be revenged on the marquis. Accordingly the next day Rohan returned to the house of the Marquise de Sévigné, and complained to her of Tonquedec's conduct. She only answered—'In truth he was rather proud.' The slight preference these words disclosed exasperated Monsieur de Rohan, and calling again on Madame de Sévigné with the purpose of meeting Tonquedec, he succeeded in his design, when, forgetful of the respect he owed to the house and the

presence of a lady, he approached his supposed rival with these words:—'They tell me, monsieur, that you boast of having bearded me here. I have come to teach you to pay me the respect that is my due.' 'Monsieur,' answered Tonquedec, 'I shall always pay you more respect than you deserve.' Other words followed, and Tonquedec at last drew his sword. Madame de Sévigné and her aunt—Madame de la Trousse—who was present, interfered, and succeeded in separating the adversaries. Tonquedec at their entreaties quitted the place, but did not long defer calling out the Duc de Rohan.

Madame de Sévigné, alarmed and grieved, sorry to lose the friendship of a great and powerful family, sought to conciliate them and efface by some gentle condescension the memory of a painful scene; but when Mademoiselle de Chabot (sister of the Duc de Rohan) declared to her that the first condition of a reconciliation must be her ceasing to receive Tonquedec, she refused, and her uncle, Renaud de Sévigné, coming forward as her champion, challenged the Duc de Rohan. The watchful care of the duchesse prevented this encounter, as well as that of Rohan and Tonquedec, and the death of the duc happening a short time after, threw into oblivion an event which had been to Madame de Sévigné the source of many painful emotions, and had given to her name a notoriety she could but shun.

In the month of August, 1652, we find Madame de

Sévigné once again in the solitude of the Rochers, where she writes to Ménage a letter full of friendship and amiability. Ménage was at that time the preceptor of Mademoiselle de la Vergne, as he had been that of Mademoiselle de Rabutin-Chantal. He professed a great admiration for his younger pupil, and the older one reproaches him in these terms:—

'But though she [Mademoiselle de la Vergne] be a thousand times more amiable than me, you have been ashamed of your injustice, and your conscience has been so remorseful that you have been compelled to divide your affections more equally than you did at first. I praise God for this good sentiment, and I promise you to live in such peace with so amiable a rival, that you shall hear no complaint from either. For myself, I am resolved to be all my life the sincerest friend you possess. You are at liberty to be fretful and capricious, as I am determined by my admirable patience to prove you always the offender. Endeavour that I may have no need to do so, and I beg you to continue me your friendship, which you know I hold in so particular esteem.'

Ménage was indeed fortunate in having his name thus associated with those of two women so remarkable and distinguished. Is it to be wondered at that for both he professed such strong admiration? He had, in a work then recently published, thus described Madame de Sévigné:—

'Des ouvrages du ciel le plus parfait ouvrage,
Ornement de la cour, merveille de votre âge,
Aimable Sévigné, dont les charmes puissants
Captivent la raison et maîtrisent les sens ;
Mais de qui la vertu, sur le visage peinte,
Inspire aux plus hardis le respect et la crainte.' *

Respect, Madame de Sévigné did inspire, but certainly not fear, which was most contrary to her smiling and engaging manners.

When she returned to Paris in the following year Bussy was there, having bravely served his cause, though he had reaped but little glory. He continued to court his cousin, but finding in her the same quiet determination, he left her for a while to carry his homage to Madame de Monglat, who received him less coldly. But as Bussy could not have too many intrigues on hand at one time, he chose, being on the point of returning to the army, to give a *fête* to Madame de Sévigné in the gardens of the Temple, which were under the mastership of his uncle, Hugues de Rabutin, grand prieur. This *fête* was in reality intended for Madame de Monglat, but it was given in such a way that Bussy, as he purposed no doubt, succeeded in pleasing both ladies. He himself describes the beauty of the entertainment, and we cannot give a better idea of the taste of the time than by translating his account :—

* Of heaven the most perfect work, ornament of the court, and wonder of your age, amiable Sévigné, whose charms captivate reason and overpower the senses, but whose virtue, imprinted on her countenance, inspires respect and fear in the boldest.

'First imagine in the gardens of the Temple, with which you are well acquainted, a grove traversed by two walks. At the spot where they meet there was a somewhat large circle of trees, to the branches of which had been attached a hundred glass chandeliers. On one side of this open space was erected a magnificent theatre, the decoration of which was worthy of the illumination it received—the light from hundreds of candles, which the leaves of the trees prevented from being diffused afar, threw on that spot such a glow that the sun could not have made it brighter. For the same reason also the surrounding space was so dark that eyes were useless. The night was most calm and serene. First the comedy began, which was pronounced agreeable; then twenty-four violins, having played some "ritournelles," gave out "branles," "courantes," and "petites danses." The company was not so numerous as select: some danced, some looked on, and others wandered through walks, where one person could not distinguish another. This lasted till daybreak, and as if Heaven had acted in concert with me, morning dawned just as the candles ceased to give light. This *fête* succeeded so perfectly, that on all sides I received inquiries as to the particulars, and to this day it is talked of with admiration.'

It was at this period—1653-4—that Madame de Sévigné found herself most surrounded and courted. The Comte du Lude was still faithful to her; the Prince de Conti, brother of Condé, the once enemy of

Mazarin, and now united to the cardinal's niece—Anne Martinozzi—was attracted by the charms of the young widow, and in spite of his recent marriage to a virtuous and lovable woman, was doing his utmost to be favourably noticed by her. This prince was in everything a contradiction: at once a handsome man and a cripple, he had a charming head, full of life and intelligence, with a body deformed; one day a devotee, allying himself to the Society of Jesus, the next day seeking pleasure under every form.

It is necessary to read the memoirs of the seventeenth century to comprehend and value the prestige of princes of the blood, and to understand how leniently the world looked upon their weaknesses. This will render Madame de Sévigné's conduct still more worthy of praise. She was free, and had she listened to so exalted a lover, it is probable she would have reaped more outward consideration than condemnation. Even her cousin Bussy, though still in love with her, was too ambitious not to give way to the claims of one by whose means he might obtain favours. But if he dared not be a rival of Armand de Bourbon, it was not so with Fouquet: he also was courting Madame de Sévigné. Fouquet, of whom the greatness and the fall are equal in their magnitude, was then in the plenitude of his power, his prestige, and his riches. Promoted by Mazarin to the Surintendance des Finances, the wealth of France was in his hands. He had made for himself an enormous fortune;

his prodigality and his generosity knew no bounds. Fouquet was one of those powerful and masterly organizations, whose faculties seem to embrace every variety of human capacity and enjoyment. Business, art, pleasure, he could attend to all, and in all excel. So great was the success of Fouquet among women, that thinking of him Boileau was led to exclaim—

'Jamais Surintendant ne trouva de cruelles.'*

In this case, however, the exception confirmed the rule, and though he did acquire in Madame de Sévigné a friend who loved and prized him, and who in the hour of his disgrace came forward to declare what she felt in terms for which she deserves eternal praise, she did not repay his passion with the feelings he wished to inspire. Fouquet's boundless wealth had so often helped him to triumph where otherwise he might have failed, that one so steadfast, so unassuming, and so disinterested (she one day recalled with delight that she never had recourse to his purse), must have surprised him, and increased his wish to make such a conquest.

Another man accustomed to victories, Turenne, had been smitten by the seductions of the Marquise de Sévigné, and having risked a declaration, found his persistence rewarded only by the deprivation of the society from which he derived so much pleasure. Several times did Madame de Sévigné deny herself to

* Never did woman frown on a Surintendant.

the great captain, thus jealously guarding her reputation in spite of the insinuations and mockeries of such a man as Bussy. The following is his advice to her on this subject—he was then in Catalonia with the Prince de Conti:—

'Montpellier, June 16, 1654.

'I have had news of you, madame. Have you any recollection of the conversation you had last winter with the Prince de Conti at Madame de Montausier's? He has told me that he made himself agreeable, found you much to his taste, and that he intends to tell you so more strongly this winter. Be cautious, my dear cousin: such as are not interested are sometimes ambitious; and she who resists the wealth of the king does not always withstand his cousin. From the manner the prince has spoken to me of his designs, I see clearly that I am destined to be his confidant. I think you will not be opposed to this, knowing as you do how well I have acquitted myself in that character under other circumstances. For myself, I am delighted with the hope of being his successor; you understand me, my fair cousin. If after all that Fortune wishes to put in your hands, I am not more prosperous, it will be your fault; but you will assuredly be careful, for you really must be of some assistance to me. What troubles me most is, that you may be embarrassed in your choice among these rivals, and I fancy I hear you saying—

'Des deux côtés j'ai beaucoup de chagrin ;
O Dieu, l'étrange peine !
Dois-je chasser l'ami de mon cousin ?
Dois-je chasser le cousin de la reine ? *

'Perhaps you will fear to attach yourself to the service of princes, and my example will not encourage you. Perhaps the figure of one will displease you; perhaps the face of the other. Let me hear of the latter, and what progress he has made since my departure. . . .

'Fortune is making you great advances, my dear cousin; be not ungrateful. You are as much attached to virtue as if it were something solid, and you despise wealth as if you could never need it. . . . We shall see you one day regretting the time you will have lost; we shall see you repent having ill employed your youth, and having striven with so much trouble to acquire and retain a reputation which a calumniator can rob you of, and which depends more upon chance than upon your conduct.

'I joined the Prince de Conti at Auxerre. He did not pass by Chaseu,† because he learnt that it would take him six miles out of his way, so my preparations were useless. I have not left him since, and I am on as good terms with him as it is possible to be. We intend diverting ourselves here for two days with play, drives, and good fare, while the troops assemble to

* On both sides I am much perplexed. Must I banish the friend of my cousin (Fouquet)? Must I banish the cousin of the queen (Conti)?

† An estate of Bussy's, situated in Burgundy, near Autun.

enter Catalonia. I answer for it, my fair cousin, that you will hear me spoken of this campaign.

'Adieu, my dear cousin; think sometimes of me, and that you have no relation or friend who loves you as I do. I would wish——no, I will not say more for fear of displeasing you, but you may guess what I would wish.'

Unfortunately the answer Madame de Sévigné returned to this letter, so unworthy of any man who could pretend to any feelings of honour, so doubly despicable in one who, as a near relation, ought to have been a jealous guardian of her good name, has not been preserved. What is most deplorable in Bussy, what lowers him more than his counsel and insinuations, is the way in which he appears to ignore their ignominy. In him immorality was as natural as in others is an innate feeling of what is right. Fortunately for Madame de Sévigné, such a code of conduct as Bussy suggested to her could not tempt her, and when she reached old age, she could look back with tranquil serenity on the days of her youth, and write to the same Bussy, instead of the regrets he had predicted, words in which she reviews her life 'as having been tranquil and tolerably happy, without lustre or distinctions, but which may probably end in a more Christian way than if it had been more eventful.' But it was her privilege never to waver, and we can surmise in what terms she

wrote to Bussy by the following answer he returned to her letter:—

'Figuières, July 30, 1654.

'My God, how witty you are, my dear cousin! how well you write! how amiable you are! It must be owned, that being so prudish as you are, you are under a great obligation to me for not loving you more than I do. In truth, I take great pains to restrain myself. At times I condemn your insensibility, at others I excuse it; but I esteem you always: I have so many reasons not to displease you on this occasion, and so many also to disobey you. What! you flatter me, my dear cousin; you tell me soft things, and you will not let me have the least fondness for you. Well, I will not; one must agree to what you wish, and love you according to your own fashion; but you will have to answer one day before God for the violence I do myself, and for the evils which will follow.'

A short time after this, being still in Catalonia, Bussy writes again to his cousin, and though her letters to him have not been preserved, he himself gives a faithful account of their purport:—

'Au camp de Vergès, Aug. 17, 1654.

'You tell me so often, my dear cousin, that you would regret me greatly were I dead, and I think it so enviable to be regretted by you, that I would wish to

be in that state were it not for certain trifling reasons which hinder me. Moreover, having never found you guilty of falsehood, I prefer to trust your word on this occasion rather than test it. Besides, there is every appearance that a person who has tears in her eyes when speaking of the loss of one of her friends, would mourn much over him if he were really dead. I believe then, my dear cousin, that you love me, and I assure you that I am in regard to you as you are in regard to me; that is, satisfied to the extreme with you and your friendship. . . .

'It is true, madame, that you are strangely indignant with coquettes. I know not whether you will entertain the same feelings until you are fifty; but at all hazards I shall keep in exercise some fine sentiments of love to use with you should you take a liking for them. Till then I shall only profess the most sincere friendship, as you do not wish for anything else.

'I am glad that you are satisfied with the surintendant [Fouquet]: it is a proof that he is more reasonable, and does not take things so much to heart as he did. When you do not agree to what one wishes, madame, one must wish what you will agree to, and consider himself happy in remaining your friend. There is only you in the whole kingdom who can prevail on a lover to be contented with friendship. We see none who from being disdained do not become enemies, and I am persuaded that a woman must be gifted with extraordinary merit to be able to act in such a way

that the vexation of a rejected lover does not prompt him to quarrel with her.'

Not only did Madame de Sévigné accomplish what Bussy deemed so difficult a task, but somewhat alarmed at the persistent declarations of her cousin, she warned him that all his letters were read by her aunt, the Marquise de la Trousse. On this account every appearance of tenderness in his correspondence vanished, but as Bussy in that very letter exclaimed, alluding to the jealous affection of the Abbé de Coulanges and of his brother, Monsieur de St.-Aubin, for their niece—'You are a hundred times more jealous of yourself than they can ever be.'

The real protectors of Madame de Sévigné were in truth, not her kind uncles, but the two young children to whom she had devoted her life, and whose influence, like that of a summer morning, is felt, but not seen.

## CHAPTER XI.

1652.

Condé raises an army against the king.—He is met by Turenne near Paris.—The gates of the city open to Condé.—He quits Paris.—Entry of the king.—Imprisonment of Retz.

We cannot proceed further without briefly calling attention to the great events which had happened during the short period we have been exclusively occupied with Madame de Sévigné. It is true that she took no active part in them, but an acquaintance with what was going on is essential to the understanding of her life and letters; her allusions to passing occurrences are so frequent, and their consequences were so great, that a clear apprehension of them is indispensable.

We have seen Condé and Retz disputing even in the parliament. After those violent scenes the prestige of Condé every day declined. Irritable and ambitious, he listened to the instigations of his turbulent sister, who feared peace, and wished to continue her adventurous life, in order that La Rochefoucauld might follow her and Monsieur de Longue-

ville be forgotten. Listening to her, her two brothers followed her into Guienne, where they displayed their rebellious flag, *couleur Isabelle.* Mazarin from his exile was governing France, and profiting by every mistake of his enemies; the queen, anxious and eager for the return of her minister, seized this opportunity to call him back. Indifferent to the loud and violent opposition, he returned triumphant, though proscribed, surrounded by a host, and more than ever the master of France. The queen, with the young king, the fair youth whose presence and name gave her all her greatness, collected an army to oppose that which Condé was raising. He, forgetful of his Bourbon blood, forgetful even of the country to which he belonged, was treating with the stranger—with the hated Spaniard, and even with the Lord Protector of England. But in spite of subsidies, in spite of the genius which had been victorious so often, Condé found himself in this unholy campaign defeated or thwarted. One powerful auxiliary he had in MADEMOISELLE, who, famishing for glory and renown, hoping to be queen, and thinking to obtain for herself the throne of her boy cousin by his defeat, madly and gallantly closed against him the gates of Orleans, thus for ever associating herself in his mind with humiliation and defeat. And so Condé could approach Paris, Paris which was closing its gates equally to king and rebel. Turenne meanwhile was pursuing him hotly, and soon one great captain was face to face with the other.

Near St.-Cloud Condé found himself closely pressed. The fight began on the 1st of July, 1652: on both sides hatred and revenge called the combatants to the carnage. The Marquis de St.-Mégrin had sworn to kill Condé with his own hand, but he himself perished in the deadly enterprise. But if St.-Mégrin failed, it seemed to be fated that Condé should succumb that day. To Turenne was joined La Ferté, and their heavy artillery caused severe loss to the followers of the hero.

From Paris on one side, by the townsfolk, from Charenton on the other, by the queen and court, could be witnessed the fearful struggle. Already Condé was calling at every gate of Paris that they might be opened to permit a retreat to his bleeding soldiers. All remained closed. Then MADEMOISELLE, in tears, and followed by other great ladies animated by one interest, went in person to beg for the order which was to save Condé. At last she succeeded in obtaining it, and bravely from the Hôtel de Ville she passed through the Faubourg St.-Antoine, beyond the Bastille, to find Condé, torn, covered with dust and gore, shedding tears, yea shedding tears over the loss of so many valiant companions, and yet refusing to retreat. Was he to be abandoned? One thing alone could save him; it was, that the cannon of the Bastille should open fire. The order was given! Condé received the news with transports of joy; it was his salvation. The king and Mazarin, who made so sure of victory,

were awed by this demonstration, which proved to them that Paris was not theirs, as they had believed. The cardinal was beside himself.

The advantage was not pursued, and pell-mell the army of Condé, his wounded, baggage, and straggling combatants, entered through the Porte St.-Antoine. Condé and his foreign soldiers were dreaded, but they were to be preferred to the hated Mazarin. It was then that Monsieur le Prince associated his name with ignominy which time will never efface: the massacre at the Hôtel de Ville, on the 4th of July, that useless and cruel act, separated him for ever, not only from the old Fronde which he was sacrificing, but from the hearts of the Parisians. In face of general reprobation and hatred, he left Paris rather than submit to the king, and with the Duc de Lorraine quitted the city he had so wantonly filled with mourners, retiring to the Low Countries, thence to strive to continue the struggle.

So once again, and for ever, Mazarin, Anne, and Louis were the masters. It was then, at fourteen years of age, that the young Phœbus, in his golden locks and with his kingly prestige, rode on his white palfrey alone, and in advance of all, through the streets of his capital. It was then, for the first time, that he asserted his mastery, and took into his hands the reins of government, to relinquish them only with death. It was then also that began for Mazarin those last years of unquestioned power, and with these two

assumptions closed for France that period of dire suffering, peril, independence, and pleasurable danger which had made women as brave as men, and men as brave as heroes. It was then that manhood was forsaken, dignity forgotten, pride dissembled, and the robe of the courtier was worn by a whole nation. As the young king rode through the streets, his prancing steed was trampling under his hoofs the old liberties, the proud spirit of feudal ages. The rugged ground was left behind, and a smooth and slippery surface spread itself before the heir of the Bourbons, so smooth and so slippery that a century later Louis Capet was to lay his head under the knife of the guillotine. The stumbling-blocks of royalty had been removed, but in removing them the strong foundations of the edifice had been shaken, and, left without pillars, it was one day to fall and bury thousands under its ruins.

It was over with the Fronde. Mazarin, who had wisely retreated for a time, by his absence allowed the queen to flatter and entrap Retz, and have him afterwards arrested and taken to Vincennes (Dec. 18, 1652), as Condé had been before him. All his enemies gone, the cardinal a second time came back from his exile to enjoy for eight years the riches of France and the power of its king.

All the actors in the great drama were now dispersed and altered — Madame de Longueville in Guienne, sad, mortified, hated by La Rochefoucauld for having loved Nemours, and mourning for the same

Nemours, killed in a duel by his own brother-in-law. The beautiful and proud princesse was then beginning to taste the bitterness of adversity and the sweets of repentance; Madame de Chevreuse, the Princess Palatine, and the great Frondeuses had submitted their allegiance to the queen; MONSIEUR was exiled to Blois, and MADEMOISELLE to St.-Fargeau; Conti was soliciting his pardon, and his marriage to a niece of Mazarin was being negotiated. The triumphant success of the court brought disgrace and punishment on many friends of Madame de Sévigné, and no doubt she keenly shared the sufferings of Retz. Still she must have rejoiced at the termination of a war which had armed brother against brother.

## CHAPTER XII.

1654-5.

Madame de Sévigné at the Rochers.—Escape of Cardinal de Retz from prison.—Madame de Sévigné returns to Paris.—Pleasures of the capital.—Fair at St.-Germain.—Madame de Sévigné visits MADEMOISELLE in exile.—Bussy leaves Paris without seeing his cousin.—Letters to and from Bussy.—His eulogium of Madame de Sévigné.

MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ, leaving the noisy capital, spent the summer of 1654 at the Rochers, and thence wrote to Ménage, who had sent her a letter from the Cardinal de Retz, which she was to transmit to the Maréchal de la Meilleraye at Nantes, from whose custody the cardinal had effected his escape.

Retz, a prisoner at Vincennes, had hoped to obtain his liberty by giving up to the king his pastoral staff,* thus throwing away his greatest safeguard. The only recompense he received for this voluntary renunciation was to exchange Vincennes for the Château of Nantes, where he found himself strictly, though leniently, guarded by the Maréchal de la Meilleraye. In spite of this surveillance, Retz, aided by the Cheva-

* Retz had succeeded his uncle, Henri de Gondi, as Archbishop of Paris.

lier Renaud de Sévigné and the Duc de Brissac, contrived to escape from his prison. Whilst flying, at the full speed of the horse procured for him, he fell and dislocated his shoulder. Fainting with pain he mounted again; but soon after, when on the point of being overtaken by the soldiers pursuing him, he hid under a haystack, and remained there seven hours—seven hours of bodily anguish and mental anxiety! At last he reached a friendly shelter, whence he embarked for Spain. There he re-embarked, and after being shipwrecked, and surmounting many perils, he arrived at Rome, no more a fugitive, but a prince of the Church, to take part in the conclave which was to elect a new pope.

The cardinal, who had given his word to the Maréchal de la Meilleraye not to escape, was eager to justify his conduct: he wrote to him therefore, striving to palliate his act, and Madame de Sévigné was intrusted with the letter to forward to its destination. She had no doubt that it would have 'a very great effect,' and she thanked Ménage for having so promptly fulfilled his trust. She ends her letter by declaring coquettishly that she is still the same as when she wrote him a letter he thought worth ten thousand écus. Madame de Sévigné had not forgotten a compliment paid by Ménage in earlier days to Mademoiselle de Chantal.

During the year 1655, Madame de Sévigné did not leave the capital, which was then replete with pleasures of every description. The return of the court and the

settlement of affairs had given a new and strong impulse to pleasure and trade: the youthful king was setting the example, by seeking and creating occasions for elegant and refined amusements. Ballets and spectacles were numerous and magnificent, the king himself not disdaining to take a personal share in the pastimes; and in the ballets, where a bevy of young and noble beauties vied with each other in grace, he was to be seen in their midst.

'Le roi, notre monarque illustre,
Dont le glorieux et beau lustre
Ne peut d'aucun être terni,
Menait l'infante Mancini,
Des plus sages et gracieuses,
Et la perle des Précieuses.' *

exclaims Loret in his Gazette. Paris, he says, was mad with joy, and he is at a loss how to describe the brilliancy and number of the *fêtes.*

One of the favourite pleasure resorts was the Foire de St.-Germain. It differed so essentially from all we know or see, that it will not be uninteresting here to make some acquaintance with the tastes of the seventeenth century.

A vast bazaar existed at St.-Germain, in which every kind of richness and rarity was gathered, with lotteries, gaming-tables, and every temptation which ingenuity could invent. For two months in the year the con-

* The king, our illustrious monarch, whose glory and splendour no one can tarnish, led the charming Mancini, one of the most modest and graceful, and the pearl of the Précieuses.

course here was immense; the common herd went during the day, the nobles after nightfall. Wearing a mask, their servants in gray liveries, their carriages without arms, men and women of the first quality gave themselves up to dissipation. They walked in the midst of dazzling illuminations, through streets each of which was reserved to a specialty gathered to attract and arrest—jewels, gorgeous stuffs, mirrors, pictures—while at the lotteries and gaming-tables enormous sums were staked and lost.

So appreciated was the Foire de St.-Germain, so favourite a resort was it, that MADEMOISELLE, when in exile at St.-Fargeau, owned that she regretted it beyond everything else. To the love of pleasure was joined in that shining society the love of intrigue, and under the mask and the incognito both could be indulged, and indulged with impunity.

MADEMOISELLE, who during the year 1655 was in exile and experiencing the ingratitude of many and the steadfastness of a few, remarks in her memoirs on the gift she at that time possessed of making people ill. But all were not alike, and Madame de Sévigné faithful in adversity, fearful of no disgrace, as she was seeking no favour, was one of the small number who went to pay MADEMOISELLE their court, and her name is gratefully and honourably mentioned, as it ever was and ever deserved to be.

It is not surprising to see Bussy at this time more than ever engaged in his amorous adventures. To

his passion for Madame de Monglat, he had now added another, the object this time being the Marquise de Gourville, one of the ladies of the small court of the illustrious Charlotte de Montmorency, Princesse de Condé. This gay and unprincipled woman appears to have treated Bussy with a severity no greater than that of Madame de Monglat. Divided between these rival beauties, Bussy, on the eve of his departure for the campaign in Flanders, found no time to wish his cousin good-bye, and from the camp at Landrecy he wrote to excuse himself and ask a forgiveness readily granted. Not, however, receiving immediately an answer from Madame de Sévigné, he writes a second time, begging to know why she does not reply, and telling her that the day before his departure 'had been employed in making protestations to love eternally.' He goes on to describe, with more vivacity and truth than reserve, his last interview with Madame de Monglat, and finds an expression at once charming and true, that 'Love is a true *recommenceur*.' After his picture of love and sorrow at an approaching separation, he adds—'I suppose that the history of the surintendant is neither so gay nor so sad; but whatever it may be, I beg you to tell me.'

'I did not doubt that sooner or later you would wish me good-bye, and if it was not at my house, it would be from the camp before Landrecy,' writes Madame de Sévigné, replying to the first letter of her cousin, and indulgently putting aside his feeble

excuse, showing how unnecessary it was. 'I am very indulgent of liberty to everyone,' says she, and with calmness and friendship, testifying to her cousin the nature of her affection, which no petty jealousy could obscure, no unworthy preference increase, she goes on to say—'To speak truly, I am not much afflicted by knowing that you are with the army. I should be an unworthy cousin of so brave a cousin if I regretted seeing you taking your part in this campaign at the head of the finest corps in France, and in the glorious post you occupy. I think you would disown sentiments less noble than these: I leave weaker and tenderer feelings to others—every lover in his own fashion. For myself, I profess to be brave as well as you; these are the sentiments I wish to display. It might be possible to find ladies who would think them rather Roman,

> 'Et rendraient grâce aux dieux de n'être pas Romaines,
> Pour conserver encor quelque chose d'humain.

'But upon this I can answer them, that I am not quite inhuman, and that with all my bravery I do not fail to wish as ardently as they that your return may be prosperous.'

The brave marquise, the true well-wisher of Bussy, did not have long to wait before the rumour of his exploits reached her ears. He had greatly distin-

* And who would thank the gods that they are not Romans, but retain something human.

guished himself, and Madame de Sévigné, in her extreme satisfaction at this new accession of glory to the name of Rabutin, writes with feigned indignation—

'Paris, July 14, 1655.

'Are you determined for ever to put your relations to shame? Will you never weary of being talked of at every campaign? Do you imagine that we are pleased to hear that Monsieur de Turenne informs the court that you have done nothing worth mentioning at Landrecy? In truth it is with great grief we learn such things, and you will easily conceive how I interest myself in the affronts you offer to our house.'

With delighted pride Madame de Sévigné continues to congratulate her cousin, and only puts in incidentally, that she had seen Madame de Monglat and Madame de Gourville the day before, and had heard from them that they had received letters from him. Instead of resenting the apparent neglect, she contents herself by hoping that she may soon have a 'voiture à part,' thus playing on the word and paying to Bussy the then great compliment of comparing his style to that of Voiture.

To Bussy's curious inquiries as to the progress made by the surintendant, and his solicitations for her confidence in return for his, she answers—

'Though nothing can be more gallant than what you tell me of your affairs, I do not feel tempted to make you my confidant in regard to what takes place

between the surintendant and me, and I should despair of being able to inform you of anything approaching what you have written. I continually take the same precautions and have the same fears, which very seriously impede the progress he would wish to make. I believe he will at last tire himself with always uselessly beginning the same thing.'

Bussy, in spite of his contrary declarations, could not help admiring and respecting one whose conduct was so dignified and virtuous, one who disclaimed so seriously and modestly, without blaming others, and without pride of self, the suspicion of what would in those days have been a sort of pride to many. Fouquet was one whose homage and love were not only hardly ever coldly received, but who was sought and courted by the proudest. His wealth, his liberality in dispensing it—and never more so than when his heart was taken—had given him a power which that of the king alone could balance. The resistance of Madame de Sévigné must therefore not only be looked on as that of a virtuous woman, but as the silent protestation of a pure mind against the weaknesses of a whole community; but her own phrase, so often repeated, that 'the world is not long unjust,' was even then true in her case, for her cynical and profligate cousin cannot refrain from praising her in the following terms:—

'I must tell you, madame, that I do not believe there exists in the world a person so generally esteemed

as you are. You are the delight of humanity. Pagans would have erected altars to you, and you would assuredly have been a goddess of something. In our days, when we are less prodigal of incense, and above all less sensible of living merit, we content ourselves by saying that there exists not a woman of your age more virtuous or more amiable. I know princes of the blood, foreign princes, great noblemen who are well-nigh princes, great captains, gentlemen, ministers of state, magistrates, and philosophers, who would be your humble servants would you allow them. Can you desire more? Unless you sigh for the liberty of the cloister you cannot go further.'

Such praise from such a man was indeed gratifying to receive, and there is no doubt that Madame de Sévigné did enjoy a reputation at once rare and undisputed. During these, the more brilliant and difficult years of her career, she was put before the world by the able hand of Mademoiselle de Scudéry as the Princesse Clarinte, one of the most graceful portraits in 'Clélie.'

# CHAPTER XIII.

1656-7.

Madame de Sévigné's thoughts on youth.—Her intimacy with MADEMOISELLE.—Beauty and intelligence of Madame de Sévigné's children.—Their education.—Description of Madame de Sévigné by Mademoiselle de Scudéry.—Madame de Sévigné an admirer of La Fontaine.

MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ at the age of thirty had already begun to look upon her youth as a thing of the past. Ménage had sent to her at the Rochers, where she was spending the summer, some verses written in her praise. She wrote to thank him for them, and says—'Your verses have reminded me of my youth, and I am curious to know why the remembrance of the loss of so irrecoverable a gift causes no sadness. Instead of the pleasure I experienced, it appears to me that I ought to have cried; but without examining whence comes this feeling, I will think only of my gratitude to you.'

Madame de Sévigné alone was to regard her youth as passed; never was she more sought after, more courted, more admired. During the year 1656, Queen Christine of Sweden, the daughter of the heroic

Gustavus Adolphus, had come to Paris, and having seen the Marquise de Sévigné, she expressed in warm terms how charming and clever she thought her. By a remarkable coincidence, Ninon de Lenclos shared with Madame de Sévigné the preference of the northern queen, who was then an object of curiosity and interest to all. To see a woman of twenty-eight, born to a throne, renouncing it voluntarily, and that when endowed with energy, perseverance, and no common intelligence, was indeed enough to excite astonishment.

Madame de Sévigné, in her country retreat, received from all sides accounts of the splendid receptions given to this queen, and writing to MADEMOISELLE, she expresses a wish to hear the opinion that princesse entertained of the queen she had just visited. This letter contains a playful description, partly in verse, of the society of the province and of their amusements. It is worded in a tone at once deferential and familiar, clearly indicating how far Madame de Sévigné was admitted to the intimacy of MADEMOISELLE, and fully prepares us for the sentiments which on an after event happening to that princesse she was to express.

The children of Madame de Sévigné had now attained an age when their education must have been the object of her greatest care. From letters written at a later period there is no doubt that Mademoiselle de Sévigné went for some time to the

Convent of the Visitation at Nantes; but her real guide was her mother, who bestowed on her, and on Charles de Sévigné, an education at once solid and brilliant. Both minds were capable of receiving it: Mademoiselle de Sévigné had a taste for abstruse philosophy, and we shall see more of the admiration of Madame de Grignan for the writings of the great Descartes. The mutual and constant affection of the brother and sister shows they were brought up together: they formed with their young and beautiful mother an amiable and charming trio, one which the Abbé Arnauld, who saw them in 1657 at the house of the Chevalier Renaud de Sévigné, describes in enthusiastic terms.

After paying homage to Madame de Sévigné's merits, remarking that her name alone speaks her praise, and that she was prized by all who knew how to prize virtue and agreeableness, he goes on to say—'I can fancy that I see her still, such as she appeared to me the first time I had the honour of beholding her. She arrived in an open chariot with her son and daughter, all three such as poets paint Latone surrounded by the young Apollo and the child Diana, so great was the beauty of the mother and children.'

Madame de Sévigné herself records the impression her lovely children made on Pomponne, the brother of the Abbé Arnauld, when she writes to Madame de Grignan:—

'Monsieur de Pomponne remembers a day when he saw you, a little girl, at my uncle Sévigné's. You were behind a window with your brother. More beautiful, says he, than an angel, you were pretending to be a princess banished from the house of her father. Your brother was equal to you in beauty. You were nine years old. He reminded me of that day, and has never forgotten any of the occasions he has had of seeing you.'

If the reputation of the Marquise de Sévigné as a writer and thinker has been acknowledged only by posterity, it is pleasing to her admirers to know that gifts so rare, and a genius so lofty, were recognized though they were not celebrated. Madame de Sévigné obtained from her contemporaries that respect and appreciation which was unconsciously experienced by all who approached her. Superiority, however modest, may assume a garb whose radiation illumines the surrounding atmosphere, imparting a light and glow, the influence of which comes home even to the most ignorant.

'The Princesse Clarinte [Madame de Sévigné],' writes Mademoiselle de Scudéry, 'has blue eyes full of fire: she dances admirably, and charms both the eyes and the heart. Her voice is soft and harmonious, and she sings with much expression. She reads a great deal, though she does not pretend to knowledge. She has learnt the African [Italian] tongue, and sings certain little African songs which please her more than

those of her own country, because they are more full of passion. She loves praise, . . . and has so much judgment, that without being severe, retiring, or solitary, she has found the means to obtain the most glorious reputation, and to keep it at a great court where she sees the flower of the land, and where she herself incites love in all who are capable of experiencing it. This same playfulness, which becomes her so well, and which by diverting her diverts others also, enables her to retain as her friends many who would rather pass for her lovers. Her mode of conduct is such that calumny has always respected her virtue, and has never caused her to be suspected of the slightest gallantry, though none be more "galante" than her. Therefore she remarks, laughingly, that she has never been enamoured but of her own glory, and that she loves jealously. When needful she can do without the world and the court, and amuses herself in the country with as much tranquillity as if she were born in the woods; and in truth she returns thence as beautiful and as gay as if she had never quitted Erico [Paris]. She wins the hearts of women as well as those of men, and has surmounted envy and ill-nature. She writes as she speaks, that is, most politely and agreeably. I have never beheld together so many attractions, so much good humour, so much politeness, so much innocence and virtue, and no other person has ever accomplished so well the blending of grace without affectation, pleasantry without malice, cheerfulness

without folly, propriety without coldness, and virtue without severity.'

Such is the testimony bestowed on Madame de Sévigné by another of her distinguished contemporaries. Her epistolary genius, which when in its full flow was to be appreciated to a small degree by her generation, was, it seems, nearly guessed at by Mademoiselle de Scudéry. No doubt she had more than once an opportunity of judging of the productions of that quick and eloquent pen, which, however, was to develop perfectly only when called upon to express in words the feelings of her heart. Charming as are some of Madame de Sévigné's letters to Bussy, replete with wit, thought, and repartee, yet they are markedly below those she penned to Madame de Grignan. It is when writing to her daughter that Madame de Sévigné reaches the most elevated eloquence and finds the truest words, the most vivid images to describe either joy or sadness. This portrait by Mademoiselle de Scudéry must strike those who are familiar with the genius of Madame de Sévigné by its remarkable exactness. She dwells upon those qualities which are most manifest and shining in Madame de Sévigné's unintentional autobiography. In her character the most opposite qualities were united, as in the extreme north, where day and night are blended without being confounded, and where at the same moment may be seen in the heavens the glorious sun and the pale moon; so in Madame de Sévigné were

joined what in others seems incompatible and irreconcilable.

No events of any importance signalized this period in the career of our marquise. Her cousin Bussy, still with the army, continued his correspondence with her, expressing the friendship to which he was soon to give a loud disclaimer by his treacherous conduct towards one whom in his better moments he acknowledged emphatically and knew to be worthy of every respect and admiration.

The *fêtes* and pastimes were still continued. Fouquet, then in the height of his power, gave brilliant and costly entertainments at his princely residence at Vaux, where under his patronage writers and artists carried on their avocations. It was his powerful approbation which brought before the public one who was afterwards to become so deservedly famous. La Fontaine, whose genius in its perfect and harmonious simplicity has some resemblance to that of Madame de Sévigné, was then beginning to attract attention. Madame de Sévigné had been one of those called together by the surintendant to listen to the poet's verses, and she had felt at the hearing of them the pleasure and admiration which her good taste could not fail to call forth. La Fontaine prided himself upon her approval, and in addressing some verses to her he says, that were he consulted her name would be written in heaven: meaning, in a Pagan sense, that she was worthy of being placed as a divinity.

## CHAPTER XIV.

1658-60.

Bussy in difficulties.—His quarrel with Madame de Sévigné.—Marriage of Louis XIV.—Representation of the 'Précieuses ridicules.'

We now come to an event which caused Madame de Sévigné the most poignant grief, and threw a dark cloud over those years of quiet and happiness. The injury came from a hand which ought rather to have been placed in a burning fire than permitted to deal such a blow. Bussy, of whom a contemporary partial to him has said, that 'he loved no one, and succeeded in being loved by none,' was every year, by his ruinous tastes, his pride and arrogance towards his superiors, and at the same time his obsequiousness where he hoped to obtain favours or promotion, damaging his fortune, his reputation, and his honour. He had succeeded in gaining the ill-will of two such powerful men as Turenne and Fouquet, while on the other hand his successes with women of easy disposition, such as the Marquise d'Uxelles, of whom he speaks to Madame de Sévigné in disrespectful and familiar terms, had excited the jealousy of many, and caused

him to be disliked and feared. His means were at no time large, but his passion for gambling, for luxury, and show, would have required an unlimited fortune. At the time of the campaign of 1656, Bussy found himself owing to pecuniary difficulties compelled to solicit the aid of his cousin. The service he required of her was the loan of ten thousand écus (2,400*l.*) on the security of the legacy to come to him from their uncle Jacques de Neuchèze, Bishop of Chalon, who had just died, leaving that amount each to Madame de Sévigné and to Bussy. She immediately signified her willingness to assist her cousin, and promised to lend him what he required; but in all such matters she was advised by her uncle, who, better acquainted with Bussy's affairs, was desirous before parting with the money to ascertain if Bussy's security was not already mortgaged. The Abbé de Coulanges therefore sent a confidential agent into Burgundy to make the necessary inquiries. This delay irritated Bussy, and to Madame de Sévigné's friendly assurances that he had but to wait a little, he returned a haughty reply, and to enable him to start immediately he accepted the generous offer of the Marquise de Monglat, who placed her diamonds at his service, on which he borrowed the sum he needed.

It was on his return from a campaign which had been glorious and successful, that Bussy, still greatly irritated against his cousin, committed the deliberate and cowardly offence which he was afterwards, it is

true, to expiate so dearly, but which nevertheless remains as an indelible spot on his name and character.

After the hardships of the war, all the young men embraced with greater ardour the relaxations which Paris could afford them, while many of the inveterate pleasure seekers saw with regret and vexation the approach of Lent, which was to cause a short interruption to their amusements. One of the wildest of this wild host, Vivonne, first gentleman of the king, proposed to some of his boon companions to escape the restraint the world imposed upon them by spending the time at one of his houses four leagues from Paris, where they would be at full liberty to divert themselves. Not content with doing this in privacy, they committed some scandalous acts of which the report spread abroad, and, greatly exaggerated, reached the king, to whom they were represented as offences to religion and order, and who punished their authors by banishment to their several country houses.

The edict was severe, and acutely felt by Bussy, who saw thus frustrated his well-grounded hopes of advancement. It was in this enforced solitude and leisure that, listening to his malicious inclination, he wrote a few satirical sketches for the amusement of Madame de Monglat, which elicited from her a warm approval. These resulted in his 'Histoire amoureuse des Gaules,' in which he laid bare the intrigues and vices of the courtiers, and it was in such company

that he placed a cruel and lying description of Madame de Sévigné. It is true that he did not intend giving publicity to his work, and it was only by fraud and without his cognizance that the manuscript was printed. Nevertheless the offence remained the same, and the consequences of it were such as to satisfy even the bitterest enemies of Bussy, who ultimately more than reaped his deserts.

About the year 1660 the first part of the life of Madame de Sévigné may be regarded as closed, not on account of any diminution in her attractions or the homage paid to her, but because it is the dawn of what may properly be termed the 'Siècle de Louis XIV.' The early associations of her youth are vanishing, society is being remodelled; the marriage of the king, an occasion for amnesty and pardon, brings back Condé as a courtier, henceforth as humble as the most lowly before his royal cousin; the course of Mazarin is all but sped, and he is to see only the accomplishment of his latest scheme—the Spanish alliance and the peace of the Pyrenees—ere he dies; the young king is to inaugurate that assumption of personal power which never wavered in his hands; and the free and somewhat mocking spirit which was so rife for many years is to become extinct for evermore. The minds and voices of men were to be fashioned differently, and much that had been admired was to be destroyed, and that which had been destroyed to be admired.

It was then that the Précieuses, who had been venerated and envied, saw their appellation ridiculed by petty imitations. From the high regions of the Hôtel de Rambouillet the cultivation of wit, fine manners, and subtle comprehension had descended to more humble abodes, where the pursuit of exaggerated refinements, from elevating, became ludicrous and trivial. A genius such as Molière, then at the most brilliant period of his career, was to seize on this decline and bring on the stage that perfect representation of all that was open to criticism and laughter in the manners and language of women whom he took care to designate as the 'Précieuses ridicules,' never intending them to be confounded, as is done by many in our day, with the real Précieuses, who were and ever continued an honour to their sex. So well understood was this by his contemporaries, so impossible was it for women such as the Marquise de Rambouillet to imagine themselves intended under an assumed character which bore no resemblance whatever to their persons, that offence could not be taken.

At the first representation of the play, which was an immense success, the whole of Madame de Rambouillet's family, excepting Monsieur and Madame de Montausier, who were in the province they governed, were among the spectators present. No disapprobation was expressed, and the epithet of Précieuse was for some years yet, in spite of the blow dealt by Molière, to remain a term of eulogy. There is reason

to suppose that Madame de Sévigné was one of those who attended this representation. She who always entertained so great an aversion to all that resembled affectation, and declares that when receiving letters written with exaggerated delicacy of style, to avoid the same in herself she feels inclined to be coarse, could not but have applauded the poet's condemnation of what she hated and despised, and which could not alter her respectful affection for the society of the true Précieuses whom Ninon was so admirably to define as the 'Jansénistes of Love.'

## CHAPTER XV.

1661–4.

Career and arrest of Fouquet.—Letters from Madame de Sévigné found among his papers.—She implores the assistance of her friends.—Honourable conduct of Bussy.—Reconciled to his cousin.—Trial of Fouquet.—Madame de Sévigné's letters to Pomponne.

In the year 1661 the life of Madame de Sévigné was to be troubled by a catastrophe which appalled a whole country, arising from perhaps the most arbitrary, and in one sense the most just, act of Louis XIV. The method adopted, the many amiable qualities of him who became the victim, the immense power, wealth, and prosperity he had enjoyed, all contributed to render the arrest of Fouquet a startling and unexpected occurrence. It surprised Europe, and threw a hundred hearts into mourning.

Fouquet on the eve of his fall had reached the very pinnacle of his greatness: the dispenser of the treasures of France, the favoured minister of the king, and to all appearance destined to take the place of Mazarin. The intention of governing by himself, of becoming acquainted with every detail of the administration, which the young monarch had expressed,

was believed to be the hot whim of an impatient youth, soon to tire of the very excess of his power. This conviction was shared by the whole court, by the queen dowager, by the very ministers of the king, and by none more so than by Fouquet, who, grasping and ambitious, awaited eagerly to seize the reins of government.

While Mazarin lived, the powerful surintendant had feared for himself. The money so lavishly bestowed, and which opened for him the secrets of hearts and letters, had made him acquainted with a report written by Colbert, then filling an obscure position in the house of the cardinal, in which was clearly shown the depredations of Fouquet, together with his abuse of power. In this report it was proposed that the surintendant should be put upon his trial and compelled to restore to the state the enormous sums he had appropriated, and at the same time the future great minister suggested and expounded a plan which, based on economy and prudence, was to restore order in the finances which the ruinous expedients of Fouquet had thrown into inexplicable confusion.

This letter of Colbert's reached Mazarin only after it had been read by Fouquet, who secured a copy of it and at once most imprudently prepared himself, in case Mazarin should attempt his arrest, to resist his authority to the utmost. This wild scheme, never to be executed, had been put on paper, and when discovered

on Fouquet's arrest was one of the most powerful instruments in the hands of his adversaries. As we have said, the report reached Mazarin, but the need of money was so great; the calls which the treaty of the Pyrenees and the king's marriage occasioned so pressing; so completely master was Fouquet of every financial resource, so boundless his credit and the confidence his elevated position conferred upon him, that his calls for money were sure to be answered. The dangerous ascendency he had acquired rendered him not only indispensable, but forced Mazarin and the king to treat him with the most distinguished favour, so that his command of resources might not be diminished.

If Fouquet had profited by this timely warning, and resolutely changed his course, he might not only have spared himself the bitter end of his life, but possibly have enjoyed for many years the height of prosperity he had reached. The death of Mazarin, instead of rendering Fouquet more wary, and inspiring him with that mode of conduct which the king solicited—the laying before him, in all its bareness and aridity, the state of his finances—lured the blind favourite of fortune to further deceit. Even then, at the eleventh hour, a frank avowal might have saved him; but so sunk was he in the abyss he had created, that he could hide it but with new deceit, and he continued to present to Louis XIV fictitious accounts of a fictitious revenue, while Colbert on the other hand,

slowly wending his way, every day revealed the truth and contradicted the reports of the surintendant.

As early as March, 1661, Louis XIV decided on the fall and ruin of Fouquet, and to make more sure of him, in every way to have it in his power to overwhelm him at one blow, he continued to lavish his smiles and regal bounties on one doomed already in his mind, not to banishment, but to death. Thus led on, the unfortunate Fouquet, believing himself entire master of his sovereign's confidence, conceived the project of offering to him that feast at Vaux which, as the last rays of the setting sun ere it dips into the silent ocean surpass in colour and brilliancy even the glory of noon, was to throw on those last hours of liberty and happiness an intensity of light which puts in darker shadow that sad period of imprisonment, of death from the living world, so soon to follow.

The hearts of men must not be too profoundly searched. If Louis XIV appears to have, as a king, committed a cruel but necessary act, it can hardly be doubted that more secret motives inspired his excess of severity. In a room at Vaux, a portrait of Louise de la Vallière, who believed her love and her fault to be hidden from the eyes of men, was seen by the king. He knew that Fouquet had sued for the good graces of her who had bestowed on him her virgin heart, and the man and the monarch, uniting in one revengeful thought, decreed, while under the roof of Fouquet, while breaking his bread, to throw him into the

dungeon of the Bastille. Hardly was time given to him to shake from his shoes the dust of the broad walks of Vaux; the echo of music, of fireworks, of laughter, was still ringing in the air when Fouquet awoke from his dream to find himself a prisoner—not, however, a forsaken one.

The names of those whom Fouquet had served or obliged were legion. In every rank of life, from the grandest and the proudest to the needy and hungry, he had bestowed some of that gold which was his foot-stool and his stumbling-block. Great ladies, courtiers, authors, people of all kinds and every name could recall some favour conferred, some help bestowed. The hand which performed these deeds must have been a gracious one, for the voice of sorrow and gratitude rose loud and great even before the wrath of the sovereign. There was one friend who had never asked a favour, one woman who, faithful in adversity, has given to posterity the exact and moving narration of Fouquet the accused and Fouquet the condemned.

When the news of the arrest reached Madame de Sévigné, she was at the Rochers, and had been led by the latest accounts of Fouquet to believe him at the very summit of favour. The king, she imagined, was to visit Brittany, accompanied by his ministers, and Madame de Sévigné was in agreeable expectation, and looking forward to the advantages her friendship with Fouquet might secure to her. It was then she heard

of his disgrace, his ruin, and that of all his friends and dependents.

Keenly as Madame de Sévigné felt the disgrace which fell on one to whom she was sincerely attached, the consequences it had for her were of a kind to cause her the most bitter tribulation. When Fouquet was arrested all his papers were seized, his private boxes being delivered to the king, who made himself acquainted with their contents. Amongst his voluminous correspondence were found some letters of Madame de Sévigné's, treating solely of some of the affairs of her family, principally those of her cousin the Marquis de la Trousse. The king read these, and struck by the easy and graceful style of the writer, spoke of them with praise, declaring at the same time that the contents were such as to do honour to her who had penned them. This assertion, formal as it was, and repeated even by Le Tellier, the king's minister, did not prevent the joyful outcry of envy and malice. Hundreds who had been compelled to acknowledge a virtue they could ill emulate, jealous women, disappointed men, raising their voices proclaimed that Madame de Sévigné was not the spotless person she pretended to be; that letters of hers—letters of love, of course—had been discovered among the papers of the surintendant; that she feigned to be a prude, only the better to hide her faults. The hue and cry was great: vice knows no greater joy than soiling the good name of virtue.

This clamour reached Madame de Sévigné in Brittany; there she learned that letters which all could have read, and with which none could now become acquainted, were being passed as testimonials of a weakness of which she was innocent. That reputation she had so carefully guarded seemed ready to escape from her: suspicion is a blast to certain minds. Madame de Sévigné felt this trial most severely, and she called upon all her friends to come to her aid in this hour of need, to explain and make known to others the truth so honourable to her. To one of these friends, Simon de Pomponne, also a friend of Fouquet's, she wrote on this occasion; and to him, three years later, she addressed day by day her letters giving an accurate account of all that happened during Fouquet's trial.

Pomponne was the son of Arnauld d'Andilly, brother of the celebrated Abbé Arnauld, the great apostle of Jansénisme. Arnauld d'Andilly, in spite of his religious opinions, had retained the good-will of the king and queen dowager, while his son, Simon de Pomponne, engaged in the public service, seemed called to attain the highest offices. He was a man of strict good sense, judging rightly and promptly, never acting hurriedly, weighing all things, modest, virtuous in his private life, and simple in his tastes. His physiognomy reflected the serenity of his mind, and he knew how to bear prosperity as he also knew how to endure adversity. He was destined to meet with an

equal share of both: the one did not discourage, the other failed to elate him; his perfect equanimity remained at all times the same. From having been admitted into the close intimacy of Fouquet, Pomponne, though in no wise implicated in any of the accusations then rising so rife against the fallen surintendant, had been a sharer in his disgrace, and exiled. From Madame de Sévigné he received a letter dated from the Rochers, in which she expresses her feelings in a tone at once sad and dignified:—

'Aux Rochers, October 11, 1661.

'Nothing is more true than that a community of interest revives friendship. You have written to me so obligingly on this subject, that I can give no better answer than to assure you that I have the same sentiments for you as you profess to have for me; in one word, I honour and esteem you very particularly. But what do you say as to all that has been found in these chests? Would you have believed that my poor letters, filled with the marriage of Monsieur de la Trousse, and all the affairs of his house, would have been put away so mysteriously? I assure you, that whatever glory I may reap from those who will do me the justice to believe that I never had any other intercourse with him, I am much affected that I am obliged to defend myself, and perhaps uselessly, with many persons who will never understand this truth. I think you will easily comprehend the grief this causes

a heart like mine. I implore you to say on this what you know; I cannot have too many friends at this moment. I am impatiently expecting your brother, the Abbé Arnauld, that I may console myself a little with him as to this singular adventure. Nevertheless, I do not fail to wish with all my heart some alleviation of suffering for the unhappy, and I beg of you always, monsieur, the continuation and honour of your friendship.

'M. DE RABUTIN-CHANTAL.'

Madame de Sévigné also wrote immediately to two other men, who had known her from her youth, and of whose friendship she was sure. Chapelain and Ménage were both called upon by their former pupil to sustain and uphold her reputation. Each had forestalled her wishes, and proclaimed what was the real nature of her correspondence with Fouquet. Chapelain in his indignation heaps on the fallen man every epithet of contempt: he denounces as unworthy of any gentleman the hoarding of women's letters—records robbing even the innocent of their good name: he treats the faithful friends of Fouquet—Mademoiselle de Scudéry, Scarron, Pellisson—as interested rabble, and assures the Marquise de Sévigné that he had not waited to receive her commands to begin a campaign so contrary to his habits. He adds, that she has not been wanting in friends to defend her cause, and that she may live and rest in peace.

Ménage was equally warm in his protestations, and does not inflict on Fouquet's followers in adversity a blame they did not deserve, the expression of which must have caused pain to Madame de Sévigné. But the most powerful of the marquise's advocates, one whom she had not solicited, and towards whom her thoughts could only have turned with regret and suspicion, was Bussy. His truly noble and chivalrous conduct in this affair remains as the only expiation of many faults. It is pleasing to see one who erred so often, for once on the side of right and proclaiming it loudly.

When the name of his cousin burst on the world as one who had favoured Fouquet, Bussy was in Paris, and the feelings of true affection for Madame de Sévigné which were dormant in his heart, awakened at this calumny. Well knowing the share of reproach attached to himself for having first questioned the character of one of whose perfect purity he was convinced, he felt sincere remorse for what he was ever to denounce as a dark spot in his life, and to efface which he stepped forward as the champion of his cousin's good name. He did not do this without having received from Le Tellier, who alone with the king had read the letters found in Fouquet's chests, the solemn assurance that those of Madame de Sévigné contained not a word which could lead to the supposition that she entertained for the surintendant a more tender regard than friendship.

Thus secure, Bussy silenced all who dared utter any insinuations in his presence; and publicly quarrelled with his brother-in-law, Rouville, who had talked of the intrigue of the Marquise de Sévigné and Fouquet as a fact beyond doubt. Bussy haughtily contradicted him, and when Rouville remarked that it ill became one who had made so much noise about her to bid others not speak, he replied—'I like noise only when I make it myself.' The championship of Bussy aided much to establish the truth and dispel rumours which were without solid foundation.

On her return from the Rochers in the following year (1662), Madame de Sévigné did not lose the opportunity of becoming reconciled to her cousin, and for a time all their former intimacy and friendship was renewed. Thus cleared, at least in the eyes of all whom envy did not blind, of the accusation which had caused her such painful anxiety, Madame de Sévigné continued to proclaim her keen interest in the fate of the prisoner awaiting his trial in the Bastille. Three years elapsed between the day of his arrest and that on which the trial opened. Friends and enemies exerted themselves equally to save or overwhelm one whose fate was an object of such intense interest. When once again Fouquet was seen by the world he had swayed, it was as an accused man defending his life, and defending it, not before impartial judges, but before relentless persecutors.

Madame de Sévigné had early used what influence

she possessed with those in whose hands the destiny of Fouquet was to be placed. Olivier le Fèvre d'Ormesson, one of the 'juges rapporteurs,' was both a friend and connection of Madame de Sévigné, and to him she more than once appealed in favour of her fallen friend. When at last the great trial commenced, and all were in suspense as to what was likely to be the issue, Madame de Sévigné took upon herself to inform Pomponne of every change in the aspect of affairs. On the second day she writes—'To-day, Monday, November 17, 1664, Monsieur Foucquet has for the second time been at the bar.' Monsieur le Chancelier Seguier, who conducted the prosecution, had by his determined ill-will towards the prisoner inspired greater sympathy for him. 'Monsieur Foucquet answered perfectly well,' is the conclusion of the account of the day's proceedings.

The next day she writes in terms of affection and esteem to Pomponne, who had expressed his gratitude to her for thus informing him of every phase of the trial, doing so when she must have known that all letters were opened, and what discontent any expression of sympathy with Fouquet was sure to awaken in the higher powers which she reverenced and feared. 'To-day our dear friend has been again at the bar. The Abbé d'Effiat bowed to him as he passed, and he in returning the salutation said—"I am your very humble servant," and that with his customary open and smiling countenance. The Abbé d'Effiat felt so

overcome with emotion that he knew not what to do.'

Then come the conversations between Fouquet and the chancelier, and the joyful assertion, that if the interrogations continue they will be very advantageous to the prisoner. Nevertheless, neither Fouquet nor his friends thought lightly of the peril in which his life was placed, and he had obtained from those with whom he still secretly corresponded the assurance that preconcerted signals would reveal his condemnation to him in his prison the instant it was known. This he requested 'that he may have time to make himself ready to receive the news from those who will bring it to him; adding, that provided he has half an hour to prepare himself, he is capable of receiving without emotion the worst that can be told him. This passage makes me shed tears, and I am convinced it moves your heart.'

The examination of Fouquet continued with the same animosity; he himself appearing to be wonderfully calm and self-possessed. Returning one day on foot to his prison, he sees some workmen engaged in making a fountain, and approaching them he gives some advice; then laughingly turning to D'Artagnan, governor of the Bastille, he says to him—'"Are you not surprised that I interfere? But it is because I was at one time rather clever at things of this kind." Those who love Monsieur Foucquet find this tranquillity admirable, and I am of the number.'

Madame de Sévigné refuses to receive any thanks for her letters, and adds—'All the feelings you express as to what I write to you are most natural; that of hope is common to all without our being able to say why, but at least it supports the heart.'

In the letter of the 27th of November she says—'I must tell you what I have done. Only think, some ladies proposed to me to go to a house facing the Arsenal, that I might see our poor friend return. I was masked, and saw him coming from a good distance. Monsieur d'Artagnan was at his side, and fifty musketeers at thirty or forty paces in the rear. He appeared rather serious. For myself, when I caught sight of him I trembled, and my heart beat so high that I was overwhelmed. On coming near us, to return to his prison, Monsieur d'Artagnan nudged him and made him notice that we were there. He thereupon bowed to us, and took that smiling expression you know so well. I do not think he recognized me, but I own to you that I was much overcome when I saw him enter by that little door. If you knew the misfortune of having a heart like mine I am sure you would pity me; but I think from the knowledge I have of you that you are equally affected.' Speaking of the need of courage, she continues—'It is not that a thousand things are not said which give hopes, but, alas! my imagination is so lively that all that is uncertain kills me.'

At first it appeared that the intention of the judges

was to make the trial last as long as possible, when suddenly the plan was altered, and Seguier (whom Madame de Sévigné calls 'Puis'), at the instigation of Colbert, who was the soul of the whole affair, and for whom the faithful friend of Fouquet has found a bitterly sarcastic name in 'Petit,' one day read to Fouquet no less than ten charges. The prisoner protested that he could not in one reply defend himself against so many accusations. When at last he was permitted to speak, which he did for two hours, the exclamation of Pussort, one of the judges, is—'I hope he will not complain that he has not been able to speak his full.' 'What say you of these words?' puts in Madame de Sévigné; 'are they not those of an excellent judge?'

On the 9th of December she describes admirably the alternation of hope and despair which filled her heart:—'I assure you that these days are long in passing, and that uncertainty is a dreadful thing. It is a misfortune which the family of the poor prisoner do not experience. I have seen them, and I admire them. One would think they had never heard or read of what has happened in times passed. What surprises me most is, that Sapho is just the same—she whose intelligence and penetration know no bounds. When I reflect on this, I flatter myself, and am persuaded, or at least I try to persuade myself, that they know more than I do. On the other hand, when I speak to people less interested, and of great good sense, I am forced

to admit that all the measures against him have been so carefully prepared that it will be a complete miracle if things turn out as we wish. One often loses but by one vote, but that one does all. . . . Still, at the bottom of my heart there is a ray of hope. I know not whence it comes, nor where it goes, and it is even not great enough to permit me to sleep in peace. I was talking yesterday of this affair with Madame du Plessis. I can only see people with whom I can speak, and who have the same feelings as myself. She hopes, as I do, without knowing the reason why. "But why do you hope?" "Because I do." These are our answers; are they not reasonable?'

This Madame du Plessis-Guénégaud, whose feelings were in such perfect harmony with those of Madame de Sévigné, had been in the days of Fouquet's prosperity one of his dearest friends, and now remained steadfastly faithful to him in the hour of his adversity. She was a woman of great wealth, intelligence, and of agreeable manners. It was she who encouraged Fouquet to protect and help authors and artists. Herself a Précieuse, in her 'enchanted palace,' as Madame de Sévigné terms the Hôtel de Nevers which she inhabited, she gathered wits and poets, and in imitation of Madame de Rambouillet, the Incomparable Arthénice, she became the charming Amalthée, under which name Madame de Sévigné often alludes to her.

The ray of hope which sustained Madame de

Sévigné and the other friends of the surintendant became brighter when Monsieur d'Ormesson, in reviewing the case, expressed an opinion that Fouquet's fortune should be confiscated, and he banished for life. This sentence seemed mild compared with what was expected. The next day Sainte-Hélène, d'Ormesson's 'unworthy colleague,' in summing up, gave as his judgment that the prisoner should suffer the penalty of death, but added that the king might be merciful. Madame de Sévigné hoped that the severe advice of D'Ormesson would be acted upon, but in this she was to be disappointed. What was her anxiety during those intervening days we can well imagine.

'People speak of nothing else; one reasons, deducts consequences, counts on one's fingers; one hopes, fears, wishes, hates, admires; one is sad, overwhelmed; in a word, my dear sir, the state we are in just now is extraordinary; but what is most admirable is the firmness of our unfortunate friend. He knows everything that goes on, and volumes could daily be filled in his praise.' At last, on the 20th of December, the fate of the prisoner, which had been trembling in the balance, was decided.

'Praise God, monsieur, and thank Him; our poor friend is saved. Thirteen agreed to the advice of Monsieur d'Ormesson, and nine to that of Sainte-Hélène. I am so happy that I am beside myself.'

It must indeed have been a joyful moment, that

when she saw rescued from death one for whom she bore such sincere affection. When she learns that the king, reversing every precedent of royal clemency, has changed the exile for a prison, she thanks God still, measuring how great had been the peril, how powerful the antagonism, and how marvellous the escape. The bitterness of death was passed, the anguish of the hour was averted, and Madame de Sévigné was justly thankful.

Every individual member of Fouquet's family was involved in his disgrace: all were exiled, all were separated; he himself was refused the consolation, always accorded to such prisoners, of his wife sharing his confinement. His faithful domestics were taken from him. Alone, and jealously guarded, he was to make his way to Pignerol, where for fourteen years he was to live the life of the tomb, knowing nothing of the outer world, and hour by hour, day by day, becoming, even for those who had truly loved him, a memory of the past. The news of his death but ruffled the surface of the hearts of his friends; his memory had been buried with that of the long-since departed.

## CHAPTER XVI.

1662-5.

Mademoiselle de Sévigné's appearance at court.—She takes part in the ballets with the king.—Praises of mother and daughter sung by the poets.—Publication of the 'Histoire amoureuse des Gaules.'—Bussy is arrested and imprisoned in the Bastille.—Madame de Sévigné reconciled to him on his release after an imprisonment of thirteen months.—He is banished for seventeen years.

We must now retrace our steps to glance at the years passed over in our consecutive narrative of Fouquet's arrest and trial, which we have thought it best not to interrupt by any reference to the events which took place in the private life of Madame de Sévigné.

Between the years 1661 and 1664, a fresh subject of joy was afforded to Madame de Sévigné. Her beloved daughter, arrived at ripe girlhood, beautiful and accomplished, a wonder to her contemporaries, the pride of her mother's heart, came out in the world to take her share in that brilliant society to which she belonged. It was in the winter of 1662-3 that Françoise de Sévigné made her appearance before that large audience then called the court. The sensation she created was great; her beauty being of

a kind well calculated to excite admiration, though in some degree a tenderness of expression was wanting. To the dazzling complexion of a blonde she united perfect regularity of features; all her portraits, that painted by Mignard especially, represent her as singularly beautiful. There is in her countenance a remarkable harmony; it seems as if the most critical eye could not wish her in any single particular to be otherwise. Looking at this 'aimable contenance,' of which Madame de Sévigné speaks so often, the peculiarity of her daughter's beauty is readily understood. Yet there was something deficient in all this perfection: a lack of warmth, of geniality, absence too of all those outward endearments which rendered her mother so fascinating, and which in the daughter silenced and repelled the admiration she called forth. However, her triumphant beauty won for her all the favours which the court could bestow and the world envy.

The years which saw her in her prime were those of the reign of Louis XIV most devoted to pleasure. The tide was then at its highest, and no sign that it could ever recede was discernible. The king, in the ardour of his youth, in all the fire of his love for Mademoiselle de la Vallière, seemed never tired of inventing and sharing in new amusements. Ballets —medley compositions in which decorator, musician, poet, and actor had each a part—were then in their greatest favour. Every kind of splendour was to be

witnessed on these occasions, while on the boards appeared the monarch, loving and beloved, with the flower of girlhood and womanhood gathered around him. Mesdemoiselles de la Vallière, de Mortemart, de St.-Simon, de Sévigné, and the charming princess, daughter of England and France, the gay Henriette, the delight of the court, the prompter of every scheme of pleasure.

In January, 1663, was performed the 'Ballet des Arts,' in which Mademoiselle de Sévigné took a part. She was one of four amazons, the three others being Mesdemoiselles de St.-Simon, de la Vallière, and de Mortemart (afterwards to become Madame de Montespan). In the midst of these beauties Mademoiselle de Sévigné was conspicuous, and Benserade, the poet of these *fêtes*, whose pen ever found new words of praise and new homage to offer, exclaims—

> 'Déjà cette beauté fait craindre sa puissance,
> Et pour nous mettre en butte à d'extrêmes dangers,
> Elle entre justement dans l'âge où l'on commence
> A distinguer les loups d'avecque les bergers.'*

During the whole of the winter the representations of this ballet were continued, and many must have been the occasions when Madame de Sévigné heard the approving remarks on her 'Belle Madelonne,' as she termed her daughter.

* Already this beauty makes her power feared, and, to expose us to extreme perils, she has now attained the age when she can distinguish the wolves from the shepherds.

These brilliant pastimes were resumed the following winter, and in the 'Amours déguisés,' Mademoiselle de Sévigné took the part of one of the loves disguised as a sea-nymph. Benserade did not fail to compliment her, and at the same time offer some delicate flattery to Madame de Sévigné. He tells Mademoiselle de Sévigné, that disguised as Love she disguises herself in her own person, and that even her mother resembles that of the young god :—

'Et jusques à sa mère, elle est comme la vôtre.'*

But the prettiest verses which the graceful poet addressed to the charming couple are those suggested to him by the ballet of the 'Naissance de Vénus,' performed in 1665, when Mademoiselle de Sévigné appeared as Omphale, the Duc de St.-Aignan as Hercules, the king himself as Alexander; the other actors being the Marquis de Villeroy, the Marquis de Rossan, MADAME, the Duchesse de Sully, and the Marquise de Vibraye :—

'Blondins accoutumés à faire des conquêtes,
Devant ce jeune objet si charmant et si doux,
Tous grands héros que vous êtes,
Il ne faut pas laisser pourtant de filer doux.
L'ingrate foule aux pieds Hercule et sa massue ;
Quelle que soit l'offrande, elle n'est point reçue :
Elle verrait mourir le plus fidèle amant,
Faute de l'assister d'un regard seulement.
Injuste procédé, sotte façon de faire,
Que la pucelle tient de madame sa mère,

* And even his mother is like yours.

Et que la bonne dame, au courage inhumain,
Se lassant aussi peu d'être belle que sage,
Encore tous les jours applique à son usage,
Au détriment du genre humain.' *

It is questionable whether Madame de Sévigné was wise in allowing her daughter to appear so often before the world, thus causing her name to be too frequently celebrated. Already the natural disposition of Mademoiselle de Sévigné, though she was perfectly sedate and virtuous, prompted her to value her charms too highly. From the account of her partial mother we gather that she lived in a sort of worship of her own person. Her high estimate of her own beauty was known to those admitted to her intimacy, and the Abbé de la Mousse, a familiar of Madame de Sévigné's house, and who had initiated the young Françoise into the obscurities of Descartes, reprehended his pupil for this undue admiration of herself, reminding her that the attractions of which she was so proud were destined to destruction. 'Yes,' was the answer, 'but they are not yet decayed.'

Had it not been for the extreme coldness of manner of Mademoiselle de Sévigné, her reputation might

* Lovers, accustomed to conquests, before this young object, so charming and so gentle, great heroes though you be, you must learn humble submission. The ungrateful one leaves Hercules at her feet; whatever the offering, it is not accepted. Rather than encourage the most faithful lover with a look, she would allow him to expire. Foolish behaviour, which the damsel inherits from her mother, and which the good lady, with unnatural courage, as little tired of being beautiful as chaste, still constantly adopts to the injury of human nature.

have suffered. Already the attentions paid to her by the 'charmant' Marquis de Villeroy had been alluded to in songs. Her indifference, however, rendered her very little susceptible to any danger, and her cold heart was a quiet guardian of her virtue. Her sentiments also were no doubt naturally elevated and straightforward; she had inherited from her mother some of that purity of heart, of that proud wish for an untarnished name which bore Madame de Sévigné such good company through life. Mademoiselle de Sévigné, like Madame de Grignan, remains a woman of irreproachable character.

This period of her daughter's triumphs was ever alluded to in after years by Madame de Sévigné with tenderness and regret. To herself also it was a time of happy prosperity. Still in the prime of life, rich, admired, and sought after, she had at her side a child she adored and whom she heard lauded by every voice. Most of the friends of her youth had come back from exile; the Cardinal de Retz, though not in favour, had returned. She was reconciled to Bussy, who assured her that the sarcastic portrait he had made of her had been burnt in the presence of Madame de Monglat. With this assurance Madame de Sévigné, when on a tour in Burgundy in 1664, met her cousin with all her former cordiality, and left Bourbilly more than ever enchanted with his society. But she was soon to discover that she had been too ready to pardon, and that even a Rabutin could break his troth.

Vanity had always been the besetting sin in Bussy; it blinded his intelligence, it robbed him of whatever was good in his nature. On this occasion it served him an ill turn, and he had for many years to reflect on his too great susceptibility to flattery.

Madame de Monglat, for whom Bussy had written the 'Histoire amoureuse des Gaules,' was not for long the only person acquainted with the subject. The manuscript was read, the portraits were transcribed or remembered; the malice of many was satisfied, and these were loud in their praises of the work. This approval put Bussy off his guard: those to whom the forbidden book was known became every day more numerous, and at last Bussy consented to leave the manuscript for two whole days in the custody of the Marquise de la Baume. She treacherously had it copied, and to be revenged on Bussy, whom she had loved, and from whom she had separated in anger, she had it printed in Holland. Had she contented herself with leaving the manuscript in its original form, the indignation against Bussy might have been great, but there would have been no particular outcry. Facts which the author had disguised in fiction were robbed of every artifice, and became scandalous libels. A key was even added, giving the real names of all the personages, and in this outrageous guise the book first came from the press at Liége in the early part of 1665.

The public were violent in their expressions of anger, and the unfortunate Bussy was overwhelmed

by the burst of indignation showered upon him. He comprehended his danger when he saw that his enemies had made him appear to have attacked the king, although nothing was farther from his intention. His first care, therefore, was to beg the monarch to inspect the original copy, and judge whether he had ever dared to outrage his sacred person. The king read the manuscript, and appears to have been rather leniently disposed than otherwise towards its author; but the many who were offended were not inclined to let him off easily. The clamour went on increasing; the heinousness of the offence was magnified, and at last an order was given that Bussy should be imprisoned in the Bastille. His arrest took place on the 17th of April, 1665.

The disgrace of Bussy, who, regarded as the greatest wit of the whole court, was much feared, and whose merits were extolled beyond measure, did not satisfy his enemies. They still pursued him in his prison, striving in every way to excite the king's anger against him. Every sarcastic song made public was attributed to him, and every offence against royalty was regarded as coming from his pen.

It was in his adversity that the littleness of Bussy's character was most manifest. Instead of accepting with courage and dignity a punishment he had so gratuitously brought upon himself, he whined under the infliction, and servilely licked his master's feet. The king and queen were in turn implored by him in

the most abject terms. Every influence he possessed at court was begged by him. In spite of these endeavours, thirteen months were to elapse ere he regained his liberty, and when at last it was accorded it was to suffer banishment for a term of seventeen years.

Though Madame de Sévigné felt cruelly affronted when she saw appear in the work of her cousin a portrait she believed to have been destroyed years before, though her indignation was equal to the offence, and she renounced all intercourse with one who had proved so treacherous, in this hour of need her true heart did not forsake him. The interest Bussy still excited in her mind was great; she defended him as far as such a bad cause could be sustained, throwing the blame on Madame de la Baume, who had abused the trust placed in her.

When Bussy quitted the Bastille, the first visit he received was from Madame de Sévigné, but the feeling of conscious guilt on one side, and that of resentful pride on the other, prevented any true cordiality. An apparent reconciliation took place, sincere in its intentions, but deficient in its accomplishment. It was only at a later period, after a frank avowal on either side, that the recollection of all estrangement was suffered to pass into oblivion and a second friendship was established.

# CHAPTER XVII.

1666–8.

Mode of living of Madame and Mademoiselle de Sévigné.—Madame du Plessis-Guénégaud.—The Coulanges.—The king an admirer of Mademoiselle de Sévigné.—Mademoiselle de Sévigné at the age of twenty-three.—Correspondence of Bussy and Madame de Sévigné renewed.—Their reconciliation.

No change took place in the mode of living of Madame de Sévigné and her daughter for the next two years—pleasures and amusements were numerous, and Mademoiselle de Sévigné reigned as an established beauty without receiving any offer of marriage worthy of her attractions. At one time the admiring homage she received from the king seemed likely to ripen into more tender sentiments, but neither the mother nor the daughter could suffer that 'excess of honour or that indignity.' The alarm, however, was but transient, and the wavering affections of the monarch fixed themselves on Madame de Montespan, one of the fair amazons of the 'Ballet des Arts.'

The renown of Mademoiselle de Sévigné's beauty and coldness was celebrated by La Fontaine, who, then

in the first flush of his success, dedicated to her the 'Lion amoureux' :—

'Sévigné, de qui les attraits
Servent aux Grâces de modèle,
Et qui naquîtes toute belle,
A votre indifférence près,
Pourriez-vous être favorable
Aux jeux innocents d'une fable,
Et voir sans vous épouvanter
Un lion qu'Amour sut dompter?
Amour est un étrange maître !
Heureux qui peut ne le connaître
Que par récit, lui ni ses coups !
Quand on en parle devant vous,
Si la vérité vous offense,
La fable au moins se peut souffrir :
Celle-ci prend bien l'assurance
De venir à vos pieds s'offrir,
Par zèle et par reconnaissance.' *

No doubt Mademoiselle de Sévigné, in spite of this reputed indifference, was pleased at the poet's delicate flattery, and Madame de Sévigné reaped in the compliments thus paid to her daughter the gratitude La Fontaine owed to her for her early appreciation of his genius, a preference which ever increased.

We have spoken before of Madame du Plessis-Guénégaud, and of the sympathy existing between

* Sévigné, whose charms might serve as a model to the Graces; you who were born all perfect excepting your indifference, could you be favourable to the innocent devices of a fable, and see, without being alarmed, a lion that Love could tame? Love is a strange master; happy is he who knows him by reputation only—him and his wounds. When he is spoken of in your presence, if truth offends you a fable at least may be tolerated; this one boldly comes to offer itself at your feet, inspired by zeal and gratitude.

her and our marquise owing to their community of thought at the time of Fouquet's trial. The intimacy had gone on progressing, and Madame de Sévigné and her daughter were constant visitors at the Hôtel de Nevers. There they met a circle at once varied and select; there La Fontaine, Boileau, Racine—all three striving for that reputation they have since enjoyed—read what have become the masterpieces of the French language and literature. In the summer Madame du Plessis-Guénégaud gathered at her Château de Fresnes the same attractions and the same company; Madame de Sévigné being more than once prevailed upon to pay long visits to her friend and share in the numerous diversions. The then most fashionable entertainment was private theatricals, and in these Madame de Sévigné took an active part.

She herself informs us in one of her letters to her daughter, that her talents for acting were considered of no mean kind. Her vivacity, her natural grace and ease, her quick understanding, no doubt contributed to make her a charming performer, and her power over an audience must have been easily acquired.

A near relation of Madame de Sévigné's, Madame de Coulanges, whom with her husband she styles the 'perfect couple,' was also among the amiable guests at the Château de Fresnes. Marie-Angélique du Gué-Bagnols had, in 1659, married Emmanuel de Coulanges, the gay and witty cousin of Madame de Sévigné. His

wife was gifted with equal vivacity, and in spite of apparent frivolity possessed a sound understanding. Niece of Le Tellier, first cousin of Louvois, Madame de Coulanges seemed destined to make the fortune of her husband. But in spite of that wit, which according to Madame de Sévigné served her in place of dignity at court, Monsieur de Coulanges could not obtain any post or favour. He lived entirely for society, of which he was during his very long life one of the chiefest ornaments. Full of pithy sayings, always ready with a song, jovial and cheerful at all hours, the 'petit Coulanges' continued simply the favourite of all who knew him. To Madame de Sévigné he was the most attached relation, the most devoted friend. It was he and his amiable wife who often consoled and cheered her in the terrible moments which followed every departure of Madame de Grignan.

It is something very noticeable that among her friends Madame de Sévigné numbered persons of every age; her mind, youthful and mature at the same time, enabled her in her prime to be intimate with her elders, and when arrived at old age to find suitable companions in the young of her own sex. Never was there one with more varied endowments. As the clear surface of a lake reflects the sky and surrounding objects, varying from the lightest hue to the most sombre tints, so the soul of Madame de Sévigné could receive every impression; retaining at once the sublimest thoughts and the most trifling conversations,

but imparting to everything that purity and depth of feeling which was hers and hers only.

Corneille, arrived at old age, and smitten by the charms of a young marquise, tells her in some complimentary lines that posterity will only believe of her beauty what he will proclaim; whatever triumphs she then enjoyed would only interest future generations because he, the poet, admired her. It is the same with the friends of Madame de Sévigné; every name made familiar to us by her pen, every man whom we know to have been one of those who often enjoyed her society, acquires an interest and excites our curiosity. He who was not indifferent to one whom posterity has placed so high, cannot be indifferent to that posterity.

Madame de Sévigné, though her numerous friends, the interest of her daughter, and the pleasures of a society she appreciated were so many inducements for her to remain in Paris, did not neglect the calls of more serious duties, but obeying the necessity which required her presence at the Rochers, she spent there the autumn and winter of 1666. When she returned from this absence her thoughts became more than ever engrossed as to the future of her daughter: of the several alliances which had been proposed for her none as yet had been found suitable. Mademoiselle de Sévigné had been solicited in marriage by the Duc de Caderousse, a young nobleman, rich and agreeable, but whose profligacy rendered him a most undesirable

husband. He was refused, and shortly after united to the eldest daughter of Madame du Plessis-Guénégaud, whose destiny justified the refusal of Madame de Sévigné.

The Comte de Mérinville and the Comte d'Etanges for different reasons were not more successful, and 'the prettiest girl in France,' as Bussy termed his young cousin, remained unmarried to her twenty-third year. The irritation and impatience of the fond mother at this state of things are clearly discernible in her correspondence with Bussy at this period.

The interchange of letters between the two Rabutins had recommenced after Bussy's banishment, but not with the unrestrained familiarity of former times. Bussy, who in November, 1666, had written to Madame de Sévigné a letter in which he describes a visit he had paid to her house at Bourbilly, proudly speaks of the escutcheons of the Rabutins, and the greatness of their race. To this epistle Madame de Sévigné replied after an interval of six months, and contenting herself with making some slight excuses, goes on to express her sorrow that he was not with the army in Flanders. Bussy's answer was immediate, and in it he haughtily disclaims any regret or repining. With a feigned philosophy he accepts his lot, and says—'There are many people in France who have greater pleasures than I have, but there are none who have fewer anxieties. Still, I have as much courage

and ambition as I ever possessed, but it is true that I am not mad enough to trouble myself with misfortunes that are inevitable. . . .

'Quand on n'a pas ce que l'on aime,
Il faut aimer ce que l'on a.'*

'Mademoiselle de Sévigné is right in sending me her compliments. After you there is no one I love and esteem so much. I am as interested in her as you are in me. I am certain that she is not so dissatisfied with her lot as I am with it. Her virtue allows her to wait with patience for an advantageous establishment, which the extraordinary esteem I hold her in convinces me cannot be long in coming. These are strong expressions, madame; but, in a word, I like her much, and think she, rather than Mademoiselle de Brancas, ought to be a princess.'†

In spite of this returning mark of friendship, a whole year elapsed before another letter was exchanged between the two cousins. In the month of June, 1668, Madame de Sévigné having heard that Bussy had met with an accident, writes to inquire after his health, remarking at the same time that she now thoroughly believes the Italian proverb—'He who offends pardons not.' This was enough to provoke a justification from Bussy. He begins by reminding

* When we cannot obtain what we wish, we must be satisfied with what we have.

† Mademoiselle de Brancas married Alphonse de Lorraine, Prince d'Harcourt.

her that the last letter had been written by himself, and goes on to say—

'Why tell me that I do not forgive you the wrong I have done you, since I have asked your pardon a thousand times, and you have promised as many times to think no more about it? I so depended upon your word that I felt as if nothing had passed between us, and if sometimes I remembered it, it was to compel me to repair the past by greater tenderness towards you. However, it appears that you now and then regret having pardoned me. All that I can believe in your favour is, that such changes are foreign to your nature, and that kindness and friendship towards me are natural to you. You have not the strength to resist fashion, and I am now out of favour. If ever I am again well spoken of, I imagine you will make less effort to applaud the good that may be said of me than you do when the contrary is done.'

He then reminds his cousin of his conduct at the time of Fouquet's arrest, and less clearly tries to establish that in their quarrel he had not been so much to blame as she thought. The remainder of the letter is full of pleasantry on the expected visit of Monsieur de Monglat to Bussy, and he also informs Madame de Sévigné that the rumour of an accident having befallen him was entirely without foundation.

To Bussy's reproach, that she had forsaken him because of his disgrace, Madame de Sévigné answers with dignity—

'Learn from me, that it is not customary to accuse me of indifference where my friends are concerned. I have many faults, but I have not that one. Such a fancy exists only in your imagination, and I have before this shown proofs of generosity in regard to the disgraced which have done me honour with many I could name if I chose. I do not think, therefore, that I deserve this reproach, and you can erase this item from the list of my defects. But let us speak of yourself.

'We are relations, and of the same blood. We please one another, we love one another, we take an interest in our mutual fortunes. You ask me to advance money to you on the ten thousand écus you are to receive as the legacy of Monsieur de Chalon. You say I refused you, while I say I lent it to you; for you know very well, and our friend Corbinelli* will bear me out, that my heart was at once agreeable, and that when we were settling some formalities in order to obtain the consent of Neuchèse that we might stand in your place to receive the legacy, you became impatient; then, having found me unfortunately imperfect enough in mind and body to be a subject for you to

* Corbinelli, to whom Madame de Sévigné thus pointedly alludes, was introduced to her by Bussy. He entertained sentiments of deep devotion for Madame de Sévigné, and was in constant communication with her. A man of talent, a musician, the descendant of an Italian family, he led a modest and contented life. The friend of the great, he always maintained his independence. He admired Madame de Sévigné, he worshipped Madame de Grignan, and was ever welcomed by her mother.

make a very pretty portrait of, you made it, and you preferred to our old friendship, to our name, and even to justice, the pleasure of being praised for your work. You know that a lady-friend of ours generously bound you to burn it: she believed you had done so, and I also believed it. Some time afterwards, having heard that you had done wonders in my defence in regard to Monsieur Foucquet, this conduct completely brought me round. I was reconciled to you on my return from Brittany, and with what sincerity? You know best. You remember also our journey in Burgundy, and with what frankness I returned all the share you had ever had in my friendship. I came back more than ever prejudiced in your favour. There were then some people who said to me, "I have seen your portrait in the hands of Madame de la Baume; I have seen it." I answered only by a disdainful smile, pitying those who were so foolish as to believe their own eyes. "I have seen it," was again repeated to me at the end of a week; and again I smile. I laughingly tell Corbinelli. He puts on the same incredulous smile which had already served me on two occasions, and I remain for five or six months in this ignorance, pitied by those whom I had laughed at. At last the unhappy day came when I saw myself, and with my own 'chequered eyes,' that which I had refused to credit. If horns had grown out of my head I should have been less astonished. I read and re-read that cruel portrait. I should have thought it very clever had it been of any

other than me, and by any other than you. I even thought it so appropriately introduced, and so fitly placed in the book, that I had not the consolation of being able to flatter myself that it was by some other hand than yours. I recognized it by many things I had heard said, more than by the delineation of my character, which I entirely disown. . . . .

'To be in the hands of everyone, to find oneself in print; to serve as an amusement to all the provinces, where such things cause harm irreparable; to meet oneself in all the libraries, and to receive this affront from whom? I will not further expound my reasons; you are intelligent, and I am assured that if you reflect but a quarter of an hour, you will see them, and think as I do.'

Madame de Sévigné, after this clear summing up of the whole case, reminds her cousin how little her behaviour corresponded with his accusations. When he was in prison she sympathized with him, and made no secret of the interest he inspired. In a few words she contrasts her conduct with his, and says in conclusion—

'This is what I wish to say for once in my life, conjuring you to erase from your mind the idea that I am in the wrong. Keep my letter, and read it again if ever the thought occurs to you to believe it, and be impartial in this, as if you were judging a case between two other persons. Let not your interest make you see what does not exist. Confess that you have

cruelly offended against the friendship that was between us, and I am disarmed. But to imagine that if you answer I can ever remain quiet, you are greatly mistaken, for it would be impossible. I shall never cease to write, and instead of two words, as I had promised, I should write two thousand; and at last I shall do so much by letters of a cruel length and mortal dullness, that I shall compel you, in spite of yourself, to ask my forgiveness, that is, to beg for life. Do so with a good grace.'

The letter Bussy wrote in answer to his cousin is a marvel of subtlety and of what can be said in defence of a bad case. To the open attack of Madame de Sévigné, he answers by explanations and protestations which prove very little except how well he could write. Professing that he did not think himself thoroughly culpable, he repeatedly acknowledges the much greater magnitude of his offence, compared with that he had imagined he had received of Madame de Sévigné. He blends compliments and assurances of esteem and affection with the reproaches he tells her she had deserved; and again disclaiming any sympathy for himself because of his banishment and broken career, he ends his letter with a compliment for Mademoiselle de Sévigné, knowing well what would best please her mother.

But Bussy made a mistake when he thought to silence his cousin. Madame de Sévigné was too firmly in the right not to uphold that truth with all

her strength. In another letter, dated the 28th of August, 1668, she takes up Bussy's arguments one by one, and succeeds, only too clearly for him, in establishing the cowardly conduct of one who was her relation and friend. Every little perfidy, every breach of faith is recalled, and, what is marvellous, in all the vivacity of offended friendship there does not appear one trace of animosity or bitterness. Madame de Sévigné, strongly as she felt what had taken place, continued to entertain for her cousin the most sincere friendship, and when at last Bussy lays down his arms and openly acknowledges himself vanquished, she joyfully exclaims—

'Rise, comte; I will not kill you when you are down, or take up your sword to resume our combat. It is better I should grant you your life and we should live in peace. . . .

'Adieu, comte. Now I have defeated you I shall everywhere say that you are the most valiant of men, and I shall speak of our fight when I talk of single combats.

'My daughter sends you her compliments. The opinion you entertain of her consoles us a little.'

Bussy was not long in thanking his cousin for her generosity, and with a foresight that proved true he writes—'I am so persuaded that Mademoiselle de Sévigné will soon be well married, that this opinion amounts to a presentiment. You will tell me news of it before a year. I am her very humble admirer.'

Thus terminated the quarrel between Madame de Sévigné and Bussy. Through the whole of it her demeanour was such as might be expected from her noble mind. She could not but resent the outrage; she was too frank not to do so openly. Yet she could twice, and twice with equal sincerity, forgive—forget was not in her power, and for many years the wound was to remain painful. The hand that had dealt the blow was pardoned, but the blow had been given. Like youth, perfect confidence is possessed but once in a lifetime; let it be shaken, and the foundations, however great the will, can never be again solidly established. On one side stands Madame de Sévigné, as noble minded as forgiving; on the other Bussy, as spiteful as revengeful—the offended and the offender, to choose between them cannot be a difficult task.

# CHAPTER XVIII.

1668–70.

Charles de Sévigné:, his character.—Joins the expedition to Candia under the orders of the Comte de St.-Paul.—Mademoiselle de Sévigné is engaged to the Comte de Grignan.—Madame de Sévigné's opinion of the alliance.—The marriage is celebrated.—Correspondence between Madame de Sévigné and Bussy.

IT was in the year 1668 that the son of Madame de Sévigné, having attained the age of twenty, began life in earnest. Charles de Sévigné, who during the lifetime of his mother was known by the title of Baron de Sévigné, differed entirely in mind and temper from his sister. Every mention of him in his mother's letters, even when referring to his youthful follies, wins for him the sympathy of the reader. In many particulars he resembled his mother. Possessed of those little graces which add so much to the charm of existence, he was a most amiable companion. He had received the same careful education as his sister, and his talents were not only equal, but perhaps superior to hers; he spoke, he wrote, he read delightfully; affectionate and demonstrative, his mother experienced from him those outpourings of tenderness which were denied her by

her more beloved daughter. 'A brave and good man,' was St.-Simon to write of him many years after his death, favourably contrasting him with his sister, whose haughty pretensions did not find favour in St.-Simon's eyes.

Sévigné appears to have been truly amiable, and to have inherited a good share of the blood of the Rabutins, to whom he bears a strong resemblance in many things. Madame de Sévigné was tenderly attached to her son, and always solicitous for his welfare and fortune; but her marked predilection for her daughter could not be hid from any eyes, and least of all from those of her son. The way in which he seems to have accepted the second place in his mother's heart is very touching: his affection remained the same, not only for Madame de Sévigné, but, what is more surprising, for his sister. The only fault we can sincerely regret in the character of Madame de Sévigné is, her having lavished a much larger share of her heart on one child, a partiality which certainly seems not to have been justified. Of the two, Charles de Sévigné was no doubt the more lovable, and we believe much more capable of returning the tenderness so often wasted on the colder disposition of Madame de Grignan.

Brave, and impatient to distinguish himself, Sévigné seized the opportunity which offered of joining the band of volunteers whom the Marquis de la Feuillade led to the assistance of Venice against the Turks

The young baron was attached to the brigade commanded by the Comte de St.-Paul, son of the Duchesse de Longueville. Sévigné, encouraged by the Duc de la Rochefoucauld and Turenne, whom he had consulted, and without referring to his mother, decided on joining an expedition destined to be both heroic and unfortunate. Madame de Sévigné, whose approval was afterwards solicited and obtained, did not without a deep pang witness his departure, and shortly afterwards she writes to Bussy—'And now he is gone, I have cried bitterly. I am truly afflicted. I shall not enjoy a moment's tranquillity during the whole expedition. I see all the perils of it; they are killing me. But I was not mistress; and on such occasions mothers have not much to say.'

The enterprise, fatal to so many, gave to Sévigné an early renown for valour which he was to sustain in his future campaigns. At the time he embarked, in the month of September, 1668, the marriage of Mademoiselle de Sévigné, though still kept a secret, was already decided on, her brother having left his proxy in the hands of the Abbé de la Mousse. It was only on the 4th of December that Madame de Sévigné wrote to Bussy—

'I must inform you of what I have no doubt will much please you. It is, that at last the "prettiest girl in France" is to be married to, not the best-looking man, but one of the most "honnêtes hommes" in the kingdom. It is Monsieur de Grignan, whom you

have long known. All his wives have died to make way for your cousin, and even his father and his son, with extraordinary kindness; so, being richer than he has ever been, and finding him to be by his birth, by his establishment, and by his good qualities such as we could wish, we do not bargain as it is customary to do, but rely on the two families that have gone before us. He appears much pleased at our alliance, and as soon as we hear from his uncle, the Archbishop of Arles—his other uncle, the Bishop of Uzès, being here—the affair will be completed before the end of the year. As I am a rather particular lady I do not fail to ask your advice and approbation. The public seems satisfied, that is something; we are so foolish that our conduct is mostly ruled by that.'

The Comte de Grignan, whom Madame de Sévigné thought to possess every requirement she could wish, was the eldest representative of an ancient and noble family of Provence. François Adhémar, Comte de Grignan, was descended from the family of Castellane, who had allied themselves to the Grignans, which name they adopted on inheriting, in 1563, the *comté* of Grignan. The Adhémars were of still more illustrious descent. The family of Monsieur de Grignan was numerous and powerful, his uncles and some of his brothers occupying high ecclesiastical positions. Two younger brothers were in the army, one being a Chevalier de Malte, the other commanding a troop of chevau-léger. The destined husband of Mademoiselle

de Sévigné was thirty-seven years of age, tall, and of a remarkably good figure, but in features by no means handsome. In manners he was stately and polite, his bearing full of dignity and well befitting his noble name and race. He was in reality possessed of the good qualities attributed to him by Madame de Sévigné, and became 'the most desirable husband, and the most agreeable for his society.' He had been twice married; the first time to the second daughter of the Marquise de Rambouillet, and afterwards to Mademoiselle du Puy-du-Fou. By his first wife he had two daughters, still children when he contracted a third alliance. At the time he proposed to Mademoiselle de Sévigné, the Comte de Grignan was Lieutenant-général du Roi en Languedoc; but this office did not hinder him from living at court, and being favourably regarded by the king, he entertained great hopes of further advancement.

Charmed with a union so gratifying and appropriate, Madame de Sévigné perhaps willingly blinded herself to the real state of her son-in-law's fortune. The Cardinal de Retz, to whom she had written of her daughter's tremulous fears as the day of the wedding drew nigh, warns her of her imprudence in these terms:—

'Great as you describe to me her fears [Mademoiselle de Sévigné's] in regard to the wedding day, I doubt whether they can equal mine as to what is to follow, since I see by your letters that you have not

had, nor hope for, any explanations, and that you abandon yourself to destiny, which is often very ungrateful and does not requite the confidence placed in it.'

The cardinal's fears were not groundless, and the constant embarrassments of Madame de Grignan, who while living in a state of ostentatious grandeur was overwhelmed with debts and difficulties, caused Madame de Sévigné to shed more tears than her own sorrows ever called forth. But now all was hope and felicity. The noble relations and friends of both parties were called upon to sign the contract on the 27th of January, 1669, and on the 29th the marriage was celebrated. The union, however, caused no separation between mother and daughter; Monsieur and Madame de Grignan continuing to reside in Paris.

The newly established harmony between Madame de Sévigné and her cousin Bussy was soon again to be disturbed. The fault this time lay with Monsieur de Grignan, who, contrary to all established customs of good breeding, had not on the occasion of his marriage written to Bussy. Madame de Sévigné, sensible of this omission, and desirous that her children and her cousin should remain on terms of amicable intercourse, took upon herself to try and persuade the vain-glorious Rabutin to write first to Monsieur de Grignan. She began by expressing her wish to Madame de Bussy, and her cousin, who had for some time ceased his correspondence with her, resumed it to explain his

silence. He very truly puts things as they stood, and says—

'From whatever point we may both be looked at, and particularly when he [Grignan] marries the daughter of my first cousin, he ought to write to me first, for I presume that my being persecuted does not exclude me from this favour. There are a thousand people who for that reason would write to me the more willingly, and omitting to do so is not like the politeness of the Hôtel de Rambouillet. I know that friendships are free, but I was not aware that things which concern good breeding were equally so. This comes from being so long away from court: one unlearns everything in the provinces.'

The answer of Madame de Sévigné is a request to Bussy to defer to her wish. She strives to put it gaily, that Monsieur de Grignan, thinking his happiness uncommon, is determined not to adhere to established customs. She begs Bussy to write him a letter such as he can so well pen, and in the same cover she enclosed a few lines from Madame de Grignan, of so formal and sour a character that they did not help to bring about what Madame de Sévigné desired. Bussy, who thought he could read between the lines, imagined he discerned in his cousin's letters the hostile influence of Monsieur de Grignan. His answer, therefore, was angry and sullen, and his allusions to Madame de Grignan anything but deferential. Madame de Sévigné, whose intentions, far from

offending Bussy, were to efface any ill impression he might have entertained from her son-in-law's silence, exclaims in wonder and pain—'Ah, comte, was it you who wrote the letter I have just received?' Then, word by word, she explains her meaning, adding—'I was cheerful and happy when writing my letter, and I had no doubt it would divert you in your solitude.'

Bussy, however, had been hurt, and only reluctantly relented. But there was no withstanding the eloquent pen of Madame de Sévigné, so Bussy wrote first to Monsieur de Grignan. Either his letter did not please, or he was dissatisfied with the answer he received, as a pause again occurred in the correspondence of the cousins. These two Rabutins were, however, 'born for one another,' and when, in 1670, the President Frémyot died, leaving his fortune to his cousin Madame de Sévigné, Bussy seized the opportunity to write to her. His letter was short, but friendly. 'We are always meeting with incidents, but our sentiments are good,' answers Madame de Sévigné, and she again resumes the correspondence.

Bussy hastens to encourage her to continue, amiably owning that he found it so tedious not writing to her, that he had gladly availed himself of the circumstance of the death of the President Frémyot to write to her, and that if that occasion had not offered itself he would have found it necessary to condole with her on the death of some one still living.

It seemed however, in spite of these renewals of affection, that the cousins could not live in peace. Writing to Bussy after a conversation with Corbinelli, Madame de Sévigné, who no doubt had been speaking to their mutual friend of the last quarrel, cannot avoid recurring rather bitterly to the past. This little rancour was met in good spirit by Bussy, and he contents himself with asking Madame de Sévigné how long she intends awakening the memory of those bygone offences, as he wishes to be prepared. He begs her also 'to take more care another time not to offend against the friendship she owes him,' and he adds a few words for Corbinelli, whom he was expecting on a visit, and who had in vain tried to prevent Madame de Sévigné sending a letter written in a moment of tumultuous recollections.

The graceful acknowledgment of her fault by Madame de Sévigné caused Bussy to tell her that she might offend him often on condition that she would always excuse herself in the same manner. A perfect understanding was established once more, not however to be never again clouded. The irresistible impulse forcing Madame de Sévigné and Bussy towards one another made them oblivious of minor quarrels, which seemed as necessary to them as are reconciliations to some lovers.

## CHAPTER XIX.

1669–71.

Monsieur de Grignan appointed Lieutenant-Général de Provence.—He leaves Madame de Grignan with her mother.—Madame de Sévigné's letters to him.—Birth of Marie-Blanche d'Adhémar.—Departure of Madame de Grignan for Provence.

MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ seemed destined to experience happiness only to feel keener regrets. As when she was united to Henri de Sévigné she had joyfully embraced the hope of felicity, soon to be troubled and dispelled, so on her daughter's marriage she felt a confident assurance, a perfect satisfaction in Madame de Grignan's prosperity and good fortune, only the more bitterly to experience anxiety and disappointment. Not a year after the long-wished-for and desired establishment of her daughter, an event occurred which for the remainder of her existence was to cause Madame de Sévigné to live in a state of impatient longing and sorrowful repining. Her separation from her daughter was a cup of grief she never drained, and which every fresh parting filled to overflowing..

On the 29th of November, 1669, the Comte de

Grignan was named Lieutenant-Général de Provence. This appointment necessitated his leaving Paris immediately and establishing himself in the province he was called upon to govern. Though only lieutenant-general, Monsieur de Grignan was to all intents and purposes governor, the holder of that office being the Duc de Vendôme, then too young to fulfil his obligations. The absence of any effective civil power had been taken advantage of by the Bishop of Marseilles, who had usurped an ascendency urgently calling for legal repression by the presence of a lieutenant-general, to take in his hands and resume in his person the authority of the king.

To conceive what the grief of Madame de Sévigné must have been at this sudden termination of all her cherished hopes, we must reflect what a journey to Provence was in those days, and what a gulf the slowness and obstacles of travelling were to create between herself and Madame de Grignan. Henceforth the delights of daily intercourse, the sharing of all petty vexations, of all small rejoicings, the unburdening of one heart to the other, the consolation of a dear presence ever near, were to be denied to that loving mother who had devoted her youth to her children.

The letters of Madame de Sévigné would not be the monument of genius they are had Madame de Grignan remained in Paris; but not at such a price would Madame de Sévigné, we feel sure, have bought the eminent place posterity has awarded her. She

often meditated on the shortness of life, and on the sacrifices we make of our dearest affections only at last to die.

But if the presence of Monsieur de Grignan was imperatively demanded in his province, his young wife, who was anticipating her confinement, and whose health had been shaken in the autumn of 1669 by an accident which happened to her at Livry, remained for a while under the care of her watchful mother. Only after the expected event should have taken place was Madame de Grignan to join her husband.

Monsieur de Grignan left Paris at the end of April, 1670, and his mother-in-law writes to him letters full of consummate diplomacy and replete with that good sense which distinguished her. She praises her daughter, and desirous of her happiness, knowing she can find it but in living affectionately with her husband, she extols her virtues, her merits, and her conjugal tenderness :—

'Paris, Wednesday, August 6, 1670.

'Is it not true that I have bestowed on you the prettiest wife in the world? Can any one be more virtuous, more regular in her conduct? Can any one love you more tenderly? Can any one have more Christian sentiments? Can any one more ardently desire to join you? Can any one be more attached to her duties? It is rather ridiculous for me to speak so well of my daughter, but in truth I admire her

behaviour quite as much as others do; and even more, as I am better acquainted with it. To tell you the truth, whatever good opinion I may have had of her on all important points, I did not imagine she would be as scrupulous on minor matters as she is. I assure you the world does her justice, and she loses none of the praises that are due to her. It is an old theme of mine, and will cause me to be stoned one of these days, that the public is neither mad nor unjust. Madame de Grignan must for the moment be too well satisfied with it to dispute with me. She has been in inconceivable anxiety about your health. I am delighted that you are cured, both for the love of you and for the love of her. I beg you, if you are to have another attack, to wait till after my daughter's confinement. She complains every day that we have kept her here, and says quite seriously that it is extremely cruel to have separated her from you. One would suppose we had taken a pleasure in putting two hundred leagues between you and her. I beg you to quiet her mind on that point, and assure her of your joy in hoping she will be happily delivered here. Nothing was more impossible than to have taken her away in the state she was; nothing will be so good for her health as to be confined under the care she has, and nothing can be so favourable for her reputation as her mode of conduct here. If after this she felt inclined to become mad and coquettish, she might be so more than a year before any one would believe it,

so good an opinion has she given of her wisdom. I call as witnesses all the Grignans here as to the truth of what I advance. My joy at all this is great, for I love you with all my heart, and am delighted that the result should have so well justified your preference. I give you no news; it would be trespassing on my daughter's rights. I only beg you to believe that no one has for you a more tender interest than I have.'

What could better endear Madame de Grignan to her husband than such letters, models of tact and the truest and most enlightened affection? Overweening as was the tenderness of Madame de Sévigné for her daughter, it never stood as a barrier to any other claim. She urges her daughter to love her husband and cherish her children: she is the first to bring to light all the good qualities of Monsieur de Grignan, and her influence was ever that of peace and harmony. It seemed to her that she could never dispose Monsieur de Grignan to receive his wife with sufficient joy and gratitude, and she writes to him again:—'She has been in despair that you should have written to me. I never saw a woman so jealous and so envious; but do what she will she cannot hinder our friendship.'

If Monsieur de Grignan was not satisfied with such a mother-in-law, he must indeed have been hard to please. With what perfect good grace she seemed to yield him the first place, and how completely she acknowledges his right to possess his wife, and re-

gards as a favour the time she is still to retain her daughter!

On the 15th of November, 1670, Madame de Grignan gave birth to a daughter. The disappointment was great, but Madame de Sévigné was too pleased at her own child's safety to feel keenly on the subject, and she joyfully announces to Monsieur de Grignan the advent of his third daughter.

Marie-Blanche, who had for godfather the Archbishop of Arles, uncle of Monsieur de Grignan, and for godmother Madame de Sévigné, was to know care and affection only for the first few years of her life, spent near that loving grandmother. The destiny of this poor little child, sent when five years old to a convent, there to be buried, like a rosebud placed in darkness and forbidden to bloom, is in truth sad and sorrowful. She seemed to have come into the world for no other purpose than to feel what it is to be unhappy and unloved.

The recovery of Madame de Grignan was to Madame de Sévigné a warning of the separation she had been looking forward to with fear and anguish for a whole year. She writes to Monsieur de Grignan —'I must love you indeed to send my daughter to you in such weather as this. What folly to quit so good a mother, with whom, according to your own account, she is so well satisfied, to go to find a man at the extremity of France! I assure you nothing is more improper than such an action.'

Early in the month of January, 1671, the departure of Madame de Grignan was contemplated. Heavy rains prevented her undertaking the journey for some time, and Madame de Sévigné explains the reason at some length to Monsieur de Grignan, as if fearful he would imagine she withheld from him a presence he justly desired. She describes in a few words the poignant grief of the last days, when the certainty of what is coming embitters every remaining moment.

A short reprieve was granted to the mother and daughter, but at last, on the 5th of February, the parting embrace was given. Blinded by tears, overcome by her sorrow, clinging to her daughter with a passionate fondness, Madame de Sévigné had to unclasp her from her heart, and watch her take her departure for a distant home.

# CHAPTER XX.

1670.

Projected marriage of MADEMOISELLE to Monsieur de Lauzun.—Letters of Madame de Sévigné to Monsieur de Coulanges.—Character of Monsieur de Lauzun.—Refusal of the king.

WE will now leave Madame de Grignan to continue her journey to Provence while we recount an occurrence of which Madame de Sévigné, in letters written to Monsieur de Coulanges in December, 1670, has made herself the immortal historian. Never perhaps has her pen more nearly resembled the brush of the painter, and in colours more vivid given life to the incident she describes:—

'Paris, Monday, Dec. 15, 1670.

'I am going to inform you of an event the most astonishing, the most surprising, the most marvellous, the most miraculous, the most triumphant, the most bewildering, the most unheard-of, the most singular, the most extraordinary, the most incredible, the most unexpected, the greatest, the smallest, the most rare, the most common, the most notorious, the most

secret until to-day, the most brilliant, the most enviable; in fine, an event of which only one parallel is to be found in past ages—even that is not a true one; an event which we cannot believe in Paris, how then can it be believed at Lyons? an event which causes everyone to cry "Mercy on us!" an event which overjoys Madame de Rohan and Madame d'Hauterive; an event, in fact, which will take place on Sunday, when those who witness it will think they see double; an event which is to take place on Sunday, and which perhaps may not be accomplished on Monday. I cannot persuade myself to tell you; guess it: I give you three guesses; do you give it up? Well then, I must tell you: Monsieur de Lauzun is to marry on Sunday, at the Louvre, guess whom: I give you four guesses; I give you ten; I give you a hundred. Madame de Coulanges says—"That is not very difficult to guess; it is Madame de la Vallière." Quite wrong, madame. "It is Mademoiselle de Retz then." Quite wrong; you are very countrified. "Ah, truly we are very stupid," say you; "it is Mademoiselle de Colbert." Further off than ever. "It is assuredly Mademoiselle de Créqui!" You are no nearer. I must at last tell you. He is to marry on Sunday, at the Louvre, with the king's permission, Mademoiselle—, Mademoiselle de . . ., Mademoiselle; guess the name: he is to marry MADEMOISELLE; faith! by my faith! my sworn faith! MADEMOISELLE, the great MADEMOISELLE; MADEMOISELLE, daughter of

the late MONSIEUR; MADEMOISELLE, granddaughter of Henri IV; Mademoiselle d'Eu, Mademoiselle de Dombes, Mademoiselle de Montpensier, Mademoiselle d'Orléans; MADEMOISELLE, first cousin of the king; MADEMOISELLE, once destined for the throne; MADEMOISELLE, the only person in France worthy of MONSIEUR. Here is a fine subject for discourse. If you cry out, if you are beside yourself, if you say we are deceiving you, that it is false, that you are being laughed at, that it is a pleasant joke, that it is a very tame invention; if, in fact, you abuse us, we shall say you are right, we have done the same ourselves.'

This letter had not reached Lyons, and imparted the news then causing such surprise and excitement everywhere, before Madame de Sévigné gives the second act in the tragi-comedy:—

'Paris, Friday, Dec. 19, 1670.

'What is termed falling from the skies is what happened last night at the Tuileries; but I must begin further back. I left you at the joy, the transports, the rapture of the princesse and her happy lover. It was on Monday, then, that the event was announced, as I have told you. Tuesday was passed in talking, in being astonished, in complimenting. On Wednesday, MADEMOISELLE prepared a deed of gift to Monsieur de Lauzun, with the object of giving him the titles, the names, and the distinctions neces-

sary for the marriage contract, which was ready the same day. She gave him then, awaiting something better, four dukedoms: the first is the Comté d'Eu, which is the highest peerage of France, and gives the first rank; the dukedom of Montpensier, the name of which he bore all day yesterday; the dukedom of St.-Fargeau, and the dukedom of Châtellerault, the whole esteemed worth twenty-two millions. The contract was drawn up afterwards, in which he took the name of Montpensier. On Thursday morning, which was yesterday, MADEMOISELLE hoped the king would sign the contract, as he had promised to do; but at about seven o'clock in the evening, the queen, MONSIEUR, and several dotards made his majesty to understand that the affair would damage his reputation; so that after summoning MADEMOISELLE and Monsieur de Lauzun, the king declared to them, in presence of Monsieur le Prince, that he forbade them to think any more of this marriage. Monsieur de Lauzun received this order with all the respect, all the submission, all the fortitude, and all the despair so great a fall demanded. As to MADEMOISELLE, yielding to her feelings, she gave way to tears, to screams, to violent grief, to reproaches, and the whole day she has kept her bed, not taking anything but broth. Here's a fine dream, here's a fine subject for a romance or a tragedy, but above all a fine subject to argue upon and speak of eternally! It is what we do day and night, evening and morning, without end, without

ceasing. We hope you will do the same; *e frà tanto vi bacio le mani.*'

There exists perhaps in history no story so curious as the passion of MADEMOISELLE for Monsieur de Lauzun, the near approach of whose marriage, so mismatched were the lovers in rank and age, was the cause of wonderment to Madame de Sévigné and her contemporaries.

MADEMOISELLE was the proud daughter of Gaston d'Orléans, brother of Louis XIII. Born in 1627, she had attained the age of forty-three at the time of her projected marriage with Lauzun. Having been all her life insensible to any tender feeling, swayed only by ambition, she appeared destined never to descend from that elevated position which not only her birth and riches, but her dignity of conduct had given her. Possessing the haughtiest spirit, MADEMOISELLE had been early led to believe that, in spite of the disparity of years, she was to share the throne of her boy-cousin. Aspiring to be a queen, but queen of a great country, and cruelly disappointed by the marriage of the king, she turned her thoughts in another direction. The Princesse de Condé's health was delicate, and had she died the hero of Rocroy would have been a suitable husband for a great princess. But the Princesse de Condé lived. Great alliances with the sons of emperors and reigning kings were negotiated for MADEMOISELLE; some she refused, and some were not con-

cluded because of the ill-will of the queen dowager. But what fate could await that daughter of France better than that she possessed in her native land? After the queen, the first in rank at court, of great power and immense wealth, free and unfettered by those ties which crushed the life out of more than one young princess taken to become a queen in a foreign court, her existence, even when damped by exile and banishment to her own princely domains, seemed one uninterrupted course of pleasure and honour. Surrounded by friends and courtiers, dispensing favours, and demanding none, exalted by her rank, by her person, by her intelligence, MADEMOISELLE, granddaughter of Henri IV, had become the 'Great Mademoiselle.' But prosperity, which had seemed to satisfy her, grew tame at last, and weary of the quarrels, of the interested affection which the hope of becoming her heir gave rise to on all sides—not excepting the king, who desired her great wealth for the dauphin—MADEMOISELLE announced her intention to marry. Who could aspire to such a hand? The excitement was great amongst the friends of the princesse.

MONSIEUR, brother of the king, had lost his beautiful young wife, Henrietta of England; and MADEMOISELLE alone in France could aspire to replace her. But these two cousins bore no love for one another: neither wished for the marriage; the king did not press it, and all eyes were turned in another direction.

There was then, in the flower of manhood, a young

prince, Bourbon on his mother's side, and heir to the name of Longueville. The Comte de St.-Paul, born at the Hôtel de Ville in the troublous days of the Fronde, was the husband that many of MADEMOISELLE'S best friends wished to give her. The difference of twenty years between him and his intended bride was disregarded. He was of royal blood, charming in person, and fit to receive the titles and riches MADEMOISELLE could bestow. Madame de Sévigné, who from her youth had always been admitted to the intimacy of MADEMOISELLE, was one of those who supported the pretensions of the Comte de St.-Paul. He seemed to be favourably received by MADEMOISELLE, and the whole family of Longueville were rejoicing and exulting when the most incredible news burst on an astonished society, that 'on Sunday, at the Louvre, with the king's permission,' MADEMOISELLE was to marry Monsieur de Lauzun.

'Lauzun,' says St.-Simon, who became his brother-in-law, 'was a man small in figure, with sandy hair, well made, with a physiognomy proud, intelligent, and imposing, but, from what I have heard said by his contemporaries, without any beauty. Full of ambition, whims, and fancies; jealous of every distinction, always wishing to overstep the mark, never satisfied with anything; with no knowledge of letters, or any ornament of the mind; naturally morose, solitary, and retired; noble in all his ways, unkind and malicious by nature, still more so through jealousy and ambi-

tion; a good friend when he was, which was rare, inclined to his relations, an enemy even of those indifferent to him; cruel in finding out faults, even inventing them; excessively brave, and also dangerously bold. A courtier equally insolent, spiteful, and obsequious; full of mean intrigues to attain his ends, for that reason dangerous to ministers; feared by all at court, and ever ready with sarcasms as witty as they were cruel, sparing none.'

This formidable personage, for one possessed of such qualifications may well be termed so, came to court a 'cadet of Gascony,' under the name of Marquis de Puyguilhem. He belonged to the house of Caumont, and was cousin to the Maréchal de Grammont, whose protection was his chief recommendation. In a very short time Puyguilhem became a favourite with Louis XIV, when his presumption attained immense proportions. The king having promised him the appointment of grand master of the artillery, Puyguilhem so prematurely spoke of the nomination that the knowledge of the king's intention reached Louvois in time for him to prevent it. Soon after, being with the king, Puyguilhem alluded to the artillery, and insolently called on the monarch to keep his word. The king answered, that having made the promise on condition of secrecy, the indiscretion of Puyguilhem had released him. Immediately the passionate young man turned his back to the king, and drawing his sword broke it in two, exclaiming that he would never again serve a

prince who knew not how to keep his word. It was then that Louis XIV showed himself worthy of his rank. Furious at the insult, he walked to the window, and opening it, threw out his stick, saying he should be sorry to strike a gentleman, and then left the room.

The next day Puyguilhem was a prisoner in the Bastille; but soon the monarch relented, and the favourite was liberated with the title of captain of the guards, an appointment the king had offered him while in prison. Once more at court, he began to attract the attention of one who so nearly raised him to the highest honours his hungry ambition could ever aspire to.

As early as 1666, MADEMOISELLE entertained a preference for Lauzun, and he at the same time began to show her silent and unobtrusive marks of his passion. In the queen's apartments, Lauzun, who had taken that name on the death of his father, always found means to approach MADEMOISELLE and deferentially and tenderly to converse with her. For a while she was blinded to the feeling which prompted her to seek the presence of Lauzun. She was too proud to suspect herself capable of any weakness, and flattered herself that she prized his intelligence and his good feeling. Slowly did the conviction come to her that love, which she had so long disdained, was obtaining the mastery of her heart. It was with a kind of horror that MADEMOISELLE discovered what she felt.

That she could love, and stoop to one so infinitely beneath her, caused her poignant grief. She battled with her inclination, avoiding every occasion of meeting Lauzun; but soon, feeling how essential his presence was to her existence, she gave way and abandoned herself to the impulse of her heart. In her memoirs she describes, day by day as it were, the progress and force of her passion. When she became convinced that no effort on her part could subdue it, her mind turned to an honourable issue—could she marry Lauzun?

The immense abyss between herself and Lauzun she clearly discerned; she knew that if she obtained the king's approval the astonishment and reprobation of the world would be great. What, the first cousin of the king take as a husband a favourite of yesterday! A princess who had been sought by the monarchs of Europe give her hand to Puyguilhem! In spite of search in history for a parallel, 'even that not a true one,' as Madame de Sévigné justly says, she made up her mind to face the world and be happy after her fashion.

It was from her own lips that Lauzun learnt who was the husband she had chosen. He at first refused to believe what he heard, and by his feigned modesty endeared himself still more to one blinded by the strongest partiality.

The king's permission was next to be obtained. When MADEMOISELLE disclosed her intentions to him,

he neither consented nor objected, but begged her to reflect on what she was about to do. Her solicitations became more urgent, and Louis XIV, prevailed on by her entreaties, sent notice to her by the Duc de Montausier that she might do as she pleased. The toleration was so great that the bearer of the permission pressed MADEMOISELLE and Lauzun to be united that very night, lest the king should reflect and retract his consent. Infatuated by love and ambition, they did not defer to so wise a counsel—in Lauzun there was a desire to make a gorgeous appearance on his wedding day; in MADEMOISELLE the noble pride of her folly. Two days of triumph and joy passed; the third cast to the winds the anticipations of both.

Madame de Sévigné, who followed all the different phases of this strange affair with intense interest, wrote on the 24th of December to Monsieur de Coulanges:—

'Now you know the romantic history of MADEMOISELLE and Monsieur de Lauzun. It is a fit subject for a tragedy, according to theatrical rules: we were arranging the acts and the scenes the other day, taking four days instead of twenty-four hours, and the piece was perfect. Never were such changes seen in so short a time; never did you witness such universal emotion; never did you hear such extraordinary news. Monsieur de Lauzun has acted his part to perfection; he has sustained his misfortune with a fortitude, a

courage, and also a grief blended with a profound respect, which has caused him to be admired by everybody. What he has lost is beyond price, but the favour of the king, which he has retained, is beyond price also, and it does not appear that his fate is to be deplored. MADEMOISELLE has likewise behaved extremely well: she wept abundantly; she has to-day recommenced paying her respects to royalty, all of whose visits she had received. This is the end of the affair. Adieu.'

Returning to the past, and to the truth of the presentiment which from the first dictated to Madame de Sévigné, that it was an event which was to 'take place on Sunday, and which perhaps may not be accomplished on Monday,' she writes again:—

'Paris, Wednesday, Dec. 31, 1670.

'I have received your answers to my letters, and I understand your astonishment at what passed between the 15th and 20th of this month: the subject was worthy of it. I admire also your rectitude of mind, and how right you were in thinking that this great machine could not go on from Monday till the following Sunday. Modesty prevents me from praising you unrestrainedly on this subject, because I thought and said exactly the same thing. I remarked to my daughter on the Monday, "This will never go on successfully till Sunday," and I wanted to wager, notwithstanding everything breathed of the wedding, that it

would not take place. In truth, on Thursday the sky became clouded, and the storm burst at ten o'clock in the evening, as I have already told you. On that very Thursday, at nine in the morning, I went to see MADEMOISELLE, having heard that she was to be married in the country, and that the Coadjuteur of Rheims was to perform the ceremony. It was thus resolved on the Wednesday evening, for as to the Louvre, that was given up on the Tuesday. MADEMOISELLE was writing; she gave orders for me to enter her room, finished her letter, and then, as she was in bed, made me kneel by the bedside. She told me to whom she was writing, and why, and spoke of the handsome presents she had made the day before, and the name she had given; adding, that there was no match for her in Europe, and that she wished to be married. She then repeated to me a conversation she had had with the king, and appeared beside herself with joy at making a man happy. She spoke to me with tenderness of the merit and gratitude of Monsieur de Lauzun, and upon that I said, "Indeed, MADEMOISELLE, you are very pleased, but why did you not promptly settle this affair on Monday? Do you not know that so great a delay gives time to the whole of the kingdom to speak, and that it is tempting God and the king to delay so long such an extraordinary affair?" She answered me that I was right; but she was so confident, that what I said made only a trifling impression then. She again spoke of the good qualities

and the good family of Lauzun. I repeated to her these lines of Sévère in 'Polyeucte'—

> '"Je ne la puis du moins blâmer d'un mauvais choix:*
> Polyeucte a du nom, et sort du sang des rois."

She embraced me tenderly. This conversation lasted an hour, and it is impossible to relate it all; but evidently I had been very agreeable during the time: I may say it without vanity, for in truth she was glad to speak to some one, her heart was so full. At ten o'clock she gave audience to the rest of France who came to compliment her on the event. She was expecting news all the morning, but received none. In the afternoon she amused herself by superintending the arrangement of Monsieur de Montpensier's [Lauzun] apartment. In the evening you know what happened. The next day, which was Friday, I went to see her. I found her in bed. On seeing me her sobs redoubled; calling me, she embraced me and covered me with her tears. She said to me, "Alas! do you remember what you told me yesterday? Ah, what cruel prudence! ah, prudence!" She made me weep to see her weep so bitterly. I have been again twice, and found her extremely afflicted: she has always treated me as a person who understands her sorrows, and she is not deceived. I have felt on this occasion sentiments it is not customary to experience towards persons of

* I cannot blame her for her bad choice: Polyeucte has a name, and is descended from kings.

such rank. This between us two and Madame de Coulanges, for you well understand that this tattle would be ridiculous to any one else. Adieu.'

The grief of MADEMOISELLE had been great indeed; the humiliation and disappointment were unspeakable. When summoned on that fatal Thursday evening into the presence of the king, and hearing from his lips the doom, as she believed, of her happiness, she had supplicated him with tears to retract his refusal; throwing herself on her knees, regardless of the presence of Monsieur le Prince, to whose remonstrances she was in a great measure indebted for the king's revulsion of feeling, she begged, she implored the monarch, the near relation, not to deal her such a blow. Louis was firm, but his resolution cost him a pang: kneeling before the unfortunate princesse, supporting her in his arms to raise her, mingling his tears with hers, he even reproached her for not having profited by his permission in the hour it was accorded, thereby giving no opportunity for time and advisers to make him see the indignity of such a marriage.

It was in the power of Louis XIV to forbid the marriage of MADEMOISELLE to the man she loved, but it was not in his power to force that love from her heart. Her affection for Lauzun was to be the means of extorting from her a part of her fortune to purchase his liberty when he had fallen into the deepest disgrace.

## CHAPTER XXI.

1671.

First letter of Madame de Sévigné to Madame de Grignan.—Friends of Madame de Sévigné: Madame de la Fayette, Madame de Lavardin, Madame de la Troche, d'Hacqueville, the Duc de la Rochefoucauld.—Madame de Sévigné's affection for her daughter.—Her care for her little granddaughter.—Madame de Grignan joins her husband.—Narrow escape on the Rhone.—Anxiety of Madame de Sévigné.—Return of Charles de Sévigné from Candia.

'My grief would be small if I could describe it to you; I shall certainly not attempt to do so. I search in vain for my dear daughter; I can no longer find her.' In those few words is summed up the bitterness of absence and death—to seek, and not to find. Madame de Sévigné, the moment she could no longer see Madame de Grignan, and when the carriage which was taking away what she loved best had disappeared from her eyes, repaired immediately to the Convent of Sainte-Marie, where she could give vent to her grief in solitude. She remained there for hours without speaking a word, and without ceasing to sob; her heart was well-nigh breaking, and her loneliness was only cheered by friends—no other child, no relation to dry her tears in that bitter hour. As soon as she

could sufficiently compose herself, she went to the constant and dear friend of her whole life, Madame de la Fayette. This illustrious woman was worthy in all respects of the companionship of Madame de Sévigné. Both found in their mutual affection, in their daily intercourse, a source of consolation and pleasure which never forsook them for one hour till they were parted by death. No cloud seems to have ever obscured the serenity of their relation since the moment when Madame de Sévigné playfully promised to Ménage to live in perfect amity with the amiable rival he had given her.

Madame de la Fayette, born at Hâvre in 1634, was the daughter of Monsieur de la Vergne, governor of the town. Her mother was, as we have seen, united by a second marriage to Renaud de Sévigné, uncle of Madame de Sévigné's husband. It was at this period that commenced a friendship so equally honourable to both. No two women were ever possessed of fewer affinities of mind and taste than Madame de Sévigné and Madame de la Fayette: on one side the most cheerful spirit, the happiest disposition, the most robust health; on the other, a mind disposed to melancholy and solitude, a frame shattered by early infirmities. Madame de Sévigné mentions with respect the 'divine reason of her friend.' Her own was not inferior, and joined to a brilliant wit. Madame de la Fayette, under the name of Segrais, published several novels which were universally applauded.

'La Princesse de Montpensier,' 'Zayde,' 'La Princesse de Clèves,' appeared in turn; the admiration they excited being so well founded that no person of taste can read these charming productions and not be delighted. The incognito of Madame de la Fayette was soon dropped, and she received the praises justly due to her talent. 'La Princesse de Clèves' is, in its few chapters, a perfect masterpiece; a model of elegant narration, of simple and truthful delineation of sentiment, of noble grief, virtue, and love. In its flowery simplicity it initiates us, not into the society of the time of Catherine de Médicis, the period selected for the scene, but into that of Louis XIV, while the whole story savours of the high moral of the Précieuses, and is a eulogium of platonic passion.

When the Duc de la Rochefoucauld became the bitter opponent of Madame de Longueville, and changed into hatred the love of bygone days, discouraged and believing all women false, he found in another feminine heart an affection of a different kind, but which remained his till the last day of his life. The Comtesse de la Fayette and the Duc de la Rochefoucauld gave a rare example of fidelity and affection. A constant invalid, being a martyr to gout, Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld found in Madame de la Fayette a companion at all times. It was with them that Madame de Sévigné spent so many hours of pleasant intercourse; she listened to the first readings of the 'Maximes;' she admired all there was to

admire in the character of Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld, and his bad qualities she overlooked. She felt grateful for the interest he professed for Madame de Grignan, and delighted in the sagacity and brilliancy of his wit; her 'cher faubourg,' that is, the company of Madame de la Fayette and Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld, was her best solace when separated from her daughter.

In the first letter of Madame de Sévigné to Madame de Grignan there is mention of nearly every one of the chosen friends who did their best to comfort her on the occasion of that sad separation. D'Hacqueville, the kind friend of mother and daughter, in whose carriage Madame de Grignan had started on her long journey, and who had cheered them at the last painful moment. The best, the most obliging of men, D'Hacqueville's early intimacy with the Cardinal de Retz had secured him admission into the circle of Madame de Sévigné. His obliging disposition was proverbial, and as he seemed capable of being in many places at one time to serve others, he received the surname of 'Les d'Hacqueville,' implying that one man alone could not accomplish what he did. Madame de Sévigné was to find him ready on all occasions to serve her, and she repaid him with sincere gratitude and friendship.

'The afternoon was spent with Madame de la Troche at the Arsenal.' This good 'Trochanire,' as Madame de Sévigné often terms her, professed and

felt for our marquise the most devoted affection, and sometimes complained that she did not receive a sufficient return, jealously comparing the affection Madame de Sévigné showed for Madame de la Fayette with that received by herself; but these transient clouds did not prevent their intercourse from being constant and sincere. In the gardens of the Arsenal, Madame de la Troche no doubt listened to many a tender regret, and offered consolation of little avail.

'I learnt at Madame de Lavardin's the news I give you—My ancient and intimate friend,' was Madame de Sévigné to write many years afterwards; 'this woman of so good and solid a mind, this illustrious widow who had gathered us all under her wing.'

The Marquise de Lavardin, some years older than Madame de Sévigné, was the eldest of those widows who formed a circle where such different attractions were combined. Her name is constantly occurring in the letters of Madame de Sévigné, and she owes to that friendship the fact of her not being forgotten.

Madame de Grignan gone, her letters were the delight of Madame de Sévigné. She received them with tears, and when reading them felt as if her heart must break. The thought of her daughter never left her:—'It is what *dévots* call an habitual thought, that which we ought to have for God.' 'Adieu, my dear child, the sole passion of my heart,

the joy and sorrow of my life. Love me always, it is the only thing that can give me any consolation.'

Nothing that concerned Madame de Grignan was trivial to her fond mother. A peasant of Sully, because he had seen her, became an object of interest for Madame de Sévigné, and she narrates in touching terms her conversation with the coachman who was to drive her daughter :—

'Alas! I met that Monsieur Busche in the streets. I stopped him, and in tears asked him his name: he told it me, and I sobbing said, "Monsieur Busche, I beg you to be careful of my daughter; do not upset her, and when you have safely taken her to Lyons, come back and tell me how she is, I will give you something for your trouble;" assuredly I shall do so.'

Losing her daughter, Madame de Sévigné felt herself wanting in what she regarded as her greatest attraction. 'As for me, I feel as if I were stripped, and robbed of all that made me agreeable. I no longer dare to see any one, and in spite of all that is said to cheer me, I have spent these days in solitude, not being able to do otherwise.'

At the commencement of this long interchange of letters between mother and daughter, the imperfections of Madame de Grignan, that haughtiness of temper and coldness of heart, are easily traced. Already Madame de Sévigné had suffered by them, and

her gentle reproaches are in truth protestations of tenderness. The infant daughter of Madame de Grignan had been left to the watchful care of her grandmother, 'who loved her, reflecting to whom she belonged.' To the young mother she writes:—'To understand the state I am in, join to the natural inclination and tenderness I have for you the circumstance of being persuaded that you love me, and imagine the intensity of my feelings. Why do you ever unkindly hide from me such precious treasures? You are fearful that I should die of joy; but do you not fear also that I should die of the sorrow of believing the contrary? I call D'Hacqueville as a witness of the grief he has seen me in at times. But I must leave this sad remembrance, and enjoy a boon without which life to me is tasteless and wearisome. . . . Ah, my child, I long to possess you a little; to hear you, to embrace you; to see you pass by even, if I desire too much. These are thoughts which are stronger than my will. I feel all the sadness of having lost you. This separation rends my heart and soul; it is as a physical pain. . . . How can I exist, knowing that whatever I do I shall no longer find my dear child?'

To soothe her loneliness, Madame de Sévigné bestowed on Marie-Blanche d'Adhémar the most tender solicitude. An alarm of fire having awoke Madame de Sévigné in the night, she rose in fear and trembling, imagining for the moment that her little grandchild was burnt. She found her quietly asleep, but the house of

her neighbour, the Comte de Guitaut, was in flames. She describes the confusion, the terror, with admirable skill:—'If we could have laughed on such an occasion, what pictures might have been made of the state we were all in! Guitaut in his shirt and drawers; Madame de Guitaut without stockings, and having lost one of her slippers; Madame de Vauvineux in a short petticoat; all her servants, all the neighbours in night-caps. The ambassador [of Venice] had on his dressing gown and wig, and admirably maintained the dignity of the "sérénissime."'

Every little event, every trifle that could amuse Madame de Grignan, is narrated to her with that incomparable grace Madame de Sévigné possessed. She overwhelms her daughter with the remembrances of their relations and friends. Madame de Grignan seems to have been neglectful in acknowledging all these kind messages, and her mother flatteringly insinuates that there is on the part of all who know her a great desire to be mentioned by her; and she, ever considerate, names those to whom she wishes to be able to show a line from her dear daughter, leaving her, we may be well sure, all the merit of the attention. She felt the deficiency of her daughter in this respect, and encourages her to be amiable and gracious by praising beyond their deserts the few occasions when Madame de Grignan dropped her customary reserve:—'Madame du Gué [mother-in-law of Monsieur de Coulanges, and wife of the intendant at Lyons] has written to

Monsieur de Coulanges that you are as beautiful as an angel. She is charmed with you, and well pleased with your politeness. . . . Do you know that to be remembered by you is considered a fortune? Those who are not, long for the distinction. The word you sent for my aunt is beyond price; you are very far from forgotten.'

The journey of Madame de Grignan was continued amidst welcome receptions on all sides; she had gone to rank first and be a kind of queen in the province her husband governed. Madame de Sévigné was not indifferent to the honours her daughter was receiving, and read of them with delight. She compares the tranquillity of her own existence with that of Madame de Grignan, giving her leisure as a reason for her long letters, and excusing Madame de Grignan beforehand if she cannot answer them at equal length:—

'I do not see a moment in which you belong to yourself. I see a husband who adores you, who cannot leave you, and who hardly believes in his felicity. I see addresses, an infinity of compliments, of civilities, of visits; you receive extreme honours, you must answer it all; you are overwhelmed. Even I, with my good will, could not be equal to it. What becomes of your laziness in all this confusion? It suffers; it hides in some little room; it dies of fright lest it should lose its place; it awaits you at stray moments to remind you at least of its existence, and to speak a word in passing. "Alas!" says it, "you have forgotten me.

Remember that I am your oldest friend, one who has never abandoned you, the faithful companion of your happy days, one who consoled you in every amusement, and even sometimes caused you to hate them. It was I who prevented your dying of *ennui* in Brittany, and when you were ill. Sometimes your mother interrupted our pleasures, but she treated me with indulgence, and I knew where to find you again. Now I know not what is to become of me; the dignity and splendour of your husband's position will cause me to perish if you have not some care for me."'

The anxiety of Madame de Sévigné as to her daughter was not without foundation, Madame de Grignan having narrowly escaped a serious accident. In spite of unfavourable weather she had embarked in a boat on the Rhone, and was well-nigh violently driven against one of the pillars of the bridge of Avignon. The peril had been great, the escape marvellous, and Madame de Sévigné felt the risk her daughter had run with an intensity that can be imagined. No words are strong enough to conjure her daughter to be prudent, and her allusions to the dreadful Rhone are incessant: 'you will be weary of them,' says she to her daughter; but the subject was too near her heart to allow her to put it aside entirely.

At the end of February the amiable Charles de Sévigné returned home, and if he did not console his mother, his presence must have lightened her anguish.

He was one with whom she could speak at ease of her dear comtesse in Provence. She assures Madame de Grignan that she knows how to select her confidants, and that she need not apprehend any grounds for ridicule. In her select circle of dear friends she could at leisure exult over the prefections and charms of her daughter.

# CHAPTER XXII.

1671.

Love intrigues of Charles de Sévigné.—Coldness of Madame de Grignan.—The king visits Monsieur le Prince at Chantilly.—Suicide of Vatel.—Arnauld d'Andilly rebukes Madame de Sévigné.—Her reflections on death.

THE absence of Madame de Grignan was but slightly compensated for by the presence of the Baron de Sévigné, who was at that time engrossed in love intrigues, his affections being divided between Ninon, still dangerous, though fifty-five years of age, and the actress La Champmeslé, young, charming, and winning all hearts by her talent. Her acting of the part of Bérénice in the tragedy of Racine had won for her the first place on the stage; her charms, however, were not so dangerous to the young Sévigné as the influence of Ninon de Lenclos. Madame de Sévigné learnt with grief the inclination of her son, remembering how fatal that influence had once been to her happiness. On this subject she writes—'But how dangerous she is, that Ninon! If you knew how she discourses on religion, you would be horrified. Her zeal to pervert young men is equal to

that of a Monsieur de St.-Germain whom we saw once at Livry. She says your brother has the simplicity of a dove.' And further:—'Madame de la Fayette and I are making great efforts to free him from so dangerous a connection.'

The gentle influence of Madame de Sévigné had won for her the entire confidence of her son: it was to her he opened his heart on all occasions. She listened complacently to the recital of his follies, reserving to herself the right to introduce 'a little word of God.' Both her son and Madame de Grignan she advised and encouraged, knowing well their faults and temptations, and being desirous beyond all for their happiness. Thinking of her daughter's probable dullness in her new home, and of her disposition to ridicule all that was not in accordance with her own tastes, Madame de Sévigné writes—'Strive, my child, to put up with what is not bad; do not disgust yourself with what is simply inferior, but amuse yourself with all that is not ridiculous.'

At the same time that she was urging her daughter to accept her new life, she never omitted to divert her with a journal of all the events of the day; every impression must be quickly transmitted to Provence. 'As soon as I hear anything worthy of admiration,' alluding to a sermon of Bourdaloue, 'I long for your presence, and admire what are in me the effects of so tender an affection.'

It was easier for Madame de Grignan to satisfy her

mother in regard to her heart by her letters than she had been able to do when they lived together under the same roof. A line, a word even, sufficed to assure Madame de Sévigné of her daughter's attachment; and rejoicing in a change she believes to have taken place, she hazards some allusions to the time when Madame de Grignan's cold behaviour had caused her to question her affection:—'You tell me I have been unjust on the subject of your affection for me, but I have been so even more than you imagine; I hardly dare own to you to what extent I carried my folly.. I have imagined you felt an aversion to me, and I have believed it because I fancied your behaviour towards me was that which I should adopt towards those I hate; and only consider, I believed this dreadful thing when most ardently wishing the contrary! In such moments—I must lay bare to you my entire weakness—if any one had thrust a poniard into my heart it would not have wounded me so mortally as that fancy.'

Well might Charles de Sévigné upbraid his mother for her predilection for one who was so far from returning the affection lavished on her. Madame de Grignan seems to have been as indifferent in regard to the little child she left behind as she was undemonstrative with her mother. Madame de Sévigné begs for a friendly word for Pecquet, the doctor who was taking great care of the little daughter. Not once does Madame de Grignan spontaneously think of

acknowledging a friendly remembrance, or returning it.

Better to enable her to think of her daughter, Madame de Sévigné spent the Holy Week in solitude at Livry, and she owns that the constant thought of that daughter hindered her from thinking of God. When she goes to St.-Germain, at the end of March, to pay her court to the queen, it is with the inquiries after her daughter that she is most delighted. Well may she term her an 'habitual thought.'

It was in the month of April of the same year that Louis XIV paid a visit to Monsieur le Prince at Chantilly, when he was received with a magnificence and pomp worthy of himself. The eyes of all France were turned towards the princely residence, and the curiosity for details of the visit was great in the extreme. Such as came to the knowledge of Madame de Sévigné were promptly forwarded to Madame de Grignan. After telling her of the hunt by moonlight, of the fireworks, of the supper, and of the gambling, she comes to the singular catastrophe brought about by this reception.

Vatel, 'maître d'hôtel' of Monsieur le Prince, had committed suicide under the impression that the fish he had ordered was not forthcoming:—'At four in the morning Vatel was up and on the alert. All was sleeping: he meets an inferior purveyor who was bringing two loads of fish: he inquires of him, "Is this all?" The other answers, "Yes, sir," not know-

ing that Vatel was expecting fish from all the sea-ports. He waits some time: the other purveyors do not arrive; his brain was on fire, he imagines no more is forthcoming; he meets Gourville, and says to him, "Monsieur, I shall not survive this disgrace; I have honour and reputation to lose." Gourville laughed at him. Vatel goes to his room, places his sword against the door, thrusts it through his body, and falls dead. It was not till the third thrust that he received a mortal wound in the heart. While this was taking place fish was arriving on all sides. Vatel is sought for to give directions. They go to his room, they knock, they break open the door, and find him bathed in his blood. Monsieur le Prince is called, and is in despair. Monsieur le Duc shed tears.'

The unfortunate man was praised and pitied by the king; but, says Madame de Sévigné, 'it was too late for poor Vatel.' 'These are minute details,' she further adds, 'but as I would wish for them myself I imagine you do the same.'

Spring had now set in, and Madame de Sévigné was contemplating a journey she was compelled to make into Brittany. Till that was determined on she returned from time to time to Livry, and went to dine with Pomponne, where she found the venerable Arnauld d'Andilly, whose increasing holiness edified her much. 'He scolded me very seriously,' says she, 'and transported with affection and zeal, he told me I was mad not to think of converting myself; that I

was a pretty pagan; that I made of you the idol of my heart; that this sort of idolatry was as dangerous as any other, though appearing less criminal to me.' Never was such a rebuke more needed; never the word 'idol' more aptly applied.

The thoughts of Madame de Sévigné on the eve of starting for Brittany, ran upon the hope of a journey to Provence, which she was to undertake on her return. Madame de Grignan was expressing to her mother her equal impatience to embrace her again, and on this Madame de Sévigné makes the following reflections:—

'You desire time to pass quickly in order that you may see me again. You know not what you are doing: it will obey you only too exactly, and when you wish to keep it back, you will no longer be mistress. There was a time when I made the same mistake, and I have repented of it, though time has not done me all the harm it inflicts on others.'

The shortness of life, the certain issue to which we all impatiently hasten, were ever present to Madame de Sévigné's mind. In the budding leaflet she discerned the withered leaf which next autumn must lie prostrate on the ground. To her daughter's inquiries whether she still loves life, she answers—'You ask me, my child, whether I still love life as well as I did. I do not conceal from you that I find it full of poignant afflictions; but I am even more disgusted with death. I consider myself so unfortunate that I

have to end with it, that if I could turn back I would joyfully do so. I am in a position that embarrasses me. I was started in life without my consent, and I must quit it; this weighs on my heart. And how shall I quit it? How? By what door? When will it be? In what disposition? Shall I suffer a thousand agonies, which will cause me to die despairing? Shall I have delirium? Shall I die from an accident? How shall I stand with God? What shall I have to present to Him? Will fear and necessity suffice to make me turn to Him? Shall I have no other feeling than that of terror? What can I hope? Am I worthy of Paradise? Am I worthy of hell? What an alternative! What a perplexity! Nothing is so devoid of reason as leaving our salvation in uncertainty, and nothing is so natural. The foolish life I lead is the easiest to comprehend. I plunge into these thoughts, and I find death so terrible that I hate life more because it leads to it, than because of the thorns with which it is full. From this you will tell me that I desire to live eternally. Not at all; but if I had been asked my choice, I would willingly have died in the arms of my nurse: this would have spared me many sorrows, and given me heaven with surety and ease. But let us talk of other things.'

Constantly do we meet with allusions to death in the correspondence of Madame de Sévigné. If she hears a sermon, the remarks of the orator on that dreadful eventuality are what most strike her. 'We

heard the other day the Abbé de Montmor. I never listened to a finer young preacher. He made the sign of the cross; he read his text; he did not scold us; he did not call us sinners; he begged us not to fear death, it being the only means through which we can live again with Jesus Christ. We agreed with him so far, we were all satisfied.'

A wider separation from her daughter arrived at last. Madame de Sévigné left Paris for the Rochers, regretting that her letters to her dear correspondent would now be devoid of interest, and that she must henceforth be contented with hearing from her and of her only.

# CHAPTER XXIII.

1671.

Madame de Sévigné leaves Paris for Brittany.—Her retinue.—Arrival at the Rochers.—Her occupations there.—The Jansénistes and Port-Royal.—Arrival of the Duc and Duchesse de Chaulnes for the Etats.—Madame de Chaulnes visits Madame de Sévigné.—Description of the Rochers.—Letters of Madame de Sévigné.—Her anxiety about Madame de Grignan.

ON her journey into Brittany the Marquise de Sévigné was accompanied by her son, her kind uncle, the Bien bon Abbé de Coulanges, and the Abbé de la Mousse. In deference to the wishes and superstitions of the Abbé de Coulanges the start was made from Paris on a Monday instead of a Friday, the day proposed by Madame de Sévigné. 'I shall accordingly start on Monday. I fancy you will like to know what my retinue consists of, that you may in imagination see me pass, as I saw Monsieur Busche go by. I take with me two calèches [barouches]. I have seven carriage horses; one horse to carry my bed, and three or four outriders. I shall be in my calèche drawn by my two fine horses; the abbé will sometimes be with me. In the other carriage, my son, La Mousse, and Hélène: that carriage will have four

horses and a postillion. . . . These are minute particulars, but we dislike them not from those we love.'

It was on the 18th of May, 1671, that Madame de Sévigné started on her journey, and on the 31st of the same month she writes her first letter at the Rochers, where she arrived on the 27th. To welcome Madame de Sévigné and her son, fifteen hundred men, 'all with a new ribbon,' had collected on the road at a league's distance from the Rochers, but owing to a mistake of the Abbé de Coulanges they waited in vain, and at ten o'clock at night were compelled to return home. On her arrival next day, being informed of the disappointment she had occasioned, Madame de Sévigné was sorry for the good peasants who had desired to greet them with joyful demonstrations, and she expresses to her daughter her kindly and considerate regret.

Madame de Sévigné found herself suddenly transplanted from a gay circle to the solitude of a country mansion in a distant province, but she had no fear of dullness. She had succeeded in drawing her son away from Paris, and she hoped that the chains which held him there would be entirely severed by absence. No more agreeable companion could be selected for her. Endowed with cheerful and buoyant spirits, his mother termed him 'a treasure of folly.' His tastes coincided with her own. While Madame de Grignan studied, and professed to derive pleasure from books of philosophy, the mother and son read 'verses, novels, histories,' and comedies, which Sévigné acted like Molière

'He understands everything: he has wit; he carries us away, and has hindered us taking to any serious reading. When he has gone we shall resume some "fine Morale" of Monsieur Nicole.'

In connection with the writer here referred to, it may not be inappropriate to say a few words respecting Madame de Sévigné's friends, the Jansénistes.

The reform of Luther had given rise to a sect who regarded themselves as the privileged defenders of the faith. The Jesuits founded by Ignatius Loyola had spread all over Europe, and their toleration of the follies of the age, provided the cloak of religion was thrown over them, had excited the reprobation of all loyal Christians. A select number of serious and austere men had purposed to restore the Church to its primitive purity, and to reduce the thraldom of the pope, every day more encroaching, to the limits within which they believed it to have been confined by the early constitutions of the Church.

Two eminent theologians, Michel Baius in the sixteenth and Edmond Richer in the seventeenth century, had published books treating of these great questions. Their works were condemned at Rome, but their doctrines earned new supporters. Duvergier de Hauranne, Abbé de St.-Cyran, and Jansénius, Bishop of Ypres, determined to unite in a common declaration of faith all those who shared their convictions. They engaged to prove that what they had advanced had been al-

ready advocated by a father of the Church like St.-Augustin.

In 1640 was published the 'Augustinus,' a work written by Jansénius, and which contained the creed of the new communion. The principal points in their doctrine were—restriction of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, the doctrine of grace, that redemption is the gift of God, that all depends on His good pleasure, and not on our efforts. To these maxims they united an exalted piety and great austerity of life. Men of irreproachable character, of talent and genius, were led away by the grandeur of these severe doctrines; they joined together and formed the nucleus of that band which became formidable enough to be severely persecuted.

At Port-Royal, in a solitary and barren spot, they took up their abode, and their influence, rendered all-powerful by the good works they profusely spread around them, became every day more potent. These revolts of conscience were viewed with severity by Louis XIV, who was early a supporter of the Jesuits. To be suspected of connivance with the Jansénistes was regarded as a crime, though in truth their differences with Rome and the Jesuits rested on subtleties. It was really the protest of sincere Christianity, of elevated principles, against the worldly indulgence and sophistical precepts of the members of the Company of Jesus. This cause was admirably defended by the masterly hand of Pascal, who in publishing, in 1656, his 'Lettres provinciales' gave to the Jesuits a fearful blow. It was

dealt with strength, and hit effectually. The whole of France read with the deepest interest these masterly productions, and Madame de Sévigné, who by her family connections found herself naturally the friend of the Jansénistes, was never tired of admiring them.

Of the marvellous faculties of Pascal it is unnecessary to speak: his genius had reached the meridian at an age when in others it begins to dawn. A boy of twelve, unaided he discovered the thirty-two propositions of Euclid. His mind was so developed, and experienced every outward sensation with such intensity; his genius weighed on his feeble frame so heavily, that his health and intellect at last gave way. Pursued by the most morbid fancies, imagining a yawning gulf ever at his side, suffering incessantly, Pascal was early doomed, and expired in the very prime of life at the age of thirty-nine, leaving behind him an immortal name and a fame unsullied.

Of the venerable Arnauld d'Andilly we have already spoken. His brother, the great apostle of 'Jansénisme,' wrote the celebrated book, 'La Fréquente Communion,' a virulent protest against the sacrilegious abuse of the Sacrament. For twelve years Arnauld never left the retreat of Port-Royal, combating for the cause he had embraced. Nicole, his friend, and who assisted him with more than one of his works, was equally eminent for his virtues and talents. He was to share the exile of Arnauld as he had shared his militant labours, for he also sustained by his

pen the morals and doctrines of Port-Royal, teaching in beautiful language the most elevated and noble precepts. It was his 'fine Morale' that Madame de Sévigné speaks of, and which she read with much delight and profit. 'Our brothers,' is the appellation she gives to the recluses who dared oppose the great army of the Jesuits.

The avidity of Madame de Sévigné for serious reading does not astonish us when regarded in connection with the nature of her own reflections. There was in her a natural inclination to devotion and philosophy, and she admirably describes the conflicting feelings of her own soul:—

'One of my great desires is to be "dévote." Every day I torment La Mousse about it. I neither belong to God nor the devil. This state fatigues me, though, between you and me, I think it the most natural in the world. We do not belong to the devil, because we fear God, and we have in our hearts a principle of religion. We do not belong to God, because His laws are severe and we have no inclination to destroy ourselves. This is what causes the lukewarm, the great number of whom does not surprise me; I understand their reasons. Still God hates them. We must therefore try not to be of them, and here lies the difficulty.'

If in the tranquillity of the Rochers Madame de Sévigné's thoughts dwelt oftener on the serious problems of life and death; she had also more leisure to allow them to rest on the grief she experienced at her

separation from her daughter. 'My daughter, love me always,' she exclaims; 'your affection is my life: I told you so the other day; it is the source of all my joys and all my sorrows. I own to you that the remainder of my existence is covered with gloom and sadness when I reflect that I shall so often spend it far from you.' And again:—Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld says that the thoughts which when we go to bed are dark gray, become black during the night. I can speak on this.'

Although Madame de Sévigné left behind her in Paris many pleasant friends and recreations, she found at the Rochers both society and amusement: she herself speaks of them with evident appreciation. In her son, in the Abbé de la Mousse, she met with affection and an endeavour to understand and please her. La Mousse studied Tasso with her in Italian, and Sévigné read to them chapters from 'Rabelais,' 'which make us die with laughter.' During the day she walked in the avenues she had planted, watching with delight and pride the growth of her trees, enjoying 'a solitude and silence it is difficult to find elsewhere.'

But all that concerned Madame de Grignan was ever pre-eminent. The letters from Provence were anxiously expected, and when a whole week elapsed without news, the anxiety of Madame de Sévigné caused her sleepless nights. With unwearied tender-ness she entertains Madame de Grignan with all that can please or flatter her. She rejoices at the descrip-

tions her daughter gives her of the magnificence of Grignan, and she longs to be herself able to judge of the abode where her beloved child reigns, she whose presence she misses so sadly :—

'I think a thousand times a day of the time when I used to see you at all hours. Alas! it is I who can well say, "Hélas! quand reviendra ce temps, bergère?"* I regret it every hour of my life, and I should wish for its return even if I were to pay for it with my blood. It is not that I have to reproach myself with having gazed on you with indifference. I declare to you that I never beheld you with that languor and indifference which habit often gives. Neither my eyes nor my heart ever accustomed themselves to that sight, and never did I look on you without joy and tenderness: if there have been moments when it did not appear, it was then I felt it most.'

While at the Rochers, Madame de Sévigné did not seek the society of her neighbours; she preferred her tranquil solitude to the tame amusements of provincial society. To Vitré, where she had a house known as the Tour de Sévigné, she went as rarely as possible, and then only when compelled by her affection for the governor of Brittany, the Duc de Chaulnes, and his wife. One person, however, was admitted to her intimacy, and Mademoiselle du Plessis-d'Argentré, whose parents, of an ancient and noble family, lived only three miles from the Rochers, is somewhat

* Alas! shepherdess, when will that time again return?

cruelly portrayed by Madame de Sévigné. The extravagant friendship she professed for the marquise, her follies and faults are commented upon to Madame de Grignan, who disliked her, and who, when she and Mademoiselle du Plessis were children together at the Rochers, had one day boxed her companion's ears, of which circumstance Madame de Sévigné had a rather too indulgent recollection :—

'Mademoiselle du Plessis is exactly as you represent her; if possible rather more foolish. What she says every day on the fear of causing me jealousy defies description; my only regret is having no one to laugh over it with me.'

Mademoiselle du Plessis, with no intelligence, and a vast amount of pretension, was constantly exposing herself to ridicule. Her delight was to believe she possessed the manners and language of the court, and to attain this she aimed at imitating Madame de Sévigné. 'The divine Plessis is false in everything. I do her too great an honour in abusing her. She acts all kinds of parts; the "dévote," the knowing person, the fastidious, the most good-natured in the world; but above all she apes me, so that she always causes me about as much pleasure as if I saw myself in a mirror which made me ridiculous, and spoke to an echo which would answer my follies.'

But company more agreeable than that of Mademoiselle du Plessis soon forced Madame de Sévigné for some time to abandon her retreat. The Baron de

Sévigné had now left the Rochers, when, at the end of July, the governor of the province arrived at Vitré to open the Etats of Brittany. These assemblies were a sort of parliament in which supplies were voted, taxes controlled, and the liberties of the province defended. They had, however, under Louis XIV, lost a great deal of their primitive importance. In many provinces where the Etats had presumed to offer remonstrances to the king, they had been suppressed. In Brittany and in Provence they were still tolerated, but had become a pretext for balls and banquets, the wishes of the monarch being communicated by the governor to the assembled nobility, who immediately deferred to them.

The governor of Brittany, the Duc de Chaulnes, and his duchesse, were, and always remained, the intimate friends of the Marquise de Sévigné. The duc was a man who, under an appearance of heaviness, hid the most clear and quick intelligence; to this was joined great capacity for business, an irreproachable probity united to extreme liberality and magnificence, great dignity, and great politeness. His wife, according to St.-Simon, with the figure of a 'Suisse,' the coarse face and the language, even the words, of the rabble, was equally endowed with the dignity, politeness, and manners of a great lady. The Duc de Chaulnes was her second husband: she lived with him in perfect concord, and only survived him a few months. Her first husband had been St.-Mégrin,

killed in the fight at the Porte St.-Antoine during the Fronde.

In Brittany the Duc and Duchesse de Chaulnes kept princely state, and the consideration and affection they showed to Madame de Sévigné never abated. No sooner did Madame de Chaulnes arrive at Vitré than she hastened to visit Madame de Sévigné, who received her with the pleasure she experienced in seeing a friend and the respect she owed to the wife of the governor. She was anxious that the duchesse should see her park in all its beauty, and she hastened her people to put her walks in order. The refusal of one of her footmen to take a share in the general hay-making was to her the pretext for an amusing letter to Monsieur de Coulanges, and which was appreciated as it deserved to be. It runs thus :—

'Aux Rochers, July 22, 1671.

'These few lines, my dear cousin, are without prejudice to the letter I have promised to write to you every fortnight. My wish just now is to inform you that you will shortly have the honour of seeing Picard, and as he is the brother of Madame de Coulanges' lackey, I am glad to give you the reason for my conduct. You are aware that Madame de Chaulnes is at Vitré. She is expecting the duc her husband in ten or twelve days, with the Etats of Brittany. You imagine I am raving. She is, then, expecting her husband with the Etats, and till then she is at Vitré, all alone and dying

of dullness. You do not comprehend how this can ever bring me back to Picard. She is, as I have said, dying of dullness. I am her only consolation, and you can conceive that I am far before Mademoiselle de Kerbone et de Kerqueoison. This is a large circuit, but we shall come at last to our object. As I am then her only consolation, after I have been to see her she is coming to me, and I desire that she shall find my garden and my walks in good order, those long alleys you like so much. You do not understand where this leads to. Here is another incidental proposition. You know that we are making hay: I had no labourers; I sent into that field which poets have celebrated to call all those who were working there to come and clean up here: you are still in the dark; and in their stead I sent all my servants haymaking. Do you know what that is? I must explain to you. Haymaking is the prettiest thing in the world; it is playfully turning hay in a field: he who knows so much knows how to make hay. All my servants went off gaily. Picard alone came to tell me he would not go; that he had not entered my service for that purpose; that it was not his business, and that he preferred returning to Paris. By my faith, my anger rose. I remembered that it was the hundredth time I had had to find fault with him; that he had neither affection nor gratitude; in a word, the measure was full to the brim. I took him at his word, and in spite of what was said to me I remained as firm as a rock, and he is gone. It is justice to treat

people according to their deserts. If you see him again, do not receive him; do not protect him; do not blame me, and remember that he is the man in the world who least likes haymaking, and the most unworthy to be well treated.

'This is the history in few words. For my part, I like narrations in which there is nothing but what is necessary; where one does not wander right and left, or begin things far off, and without vanity I believe this to be the model of agreeable narrations.'

A few days after sending this letter to her cousin, Madame de Sévigné received a visit from the Duchesse de Chaulnes, who was accompanied by the Marquis de Pomenars, an individual of most singular character. Convicted of several crimes—for making spurious coin, for carrying off the daughter of the Comte de Créance, he continued to lead a jovial existence, even going so far as to pay a visit to the judge who had condemned him. The Duchesse de Chaulnes and Madame de Sévigné appear to have paid little regard to his imputed crimes, and to have diverted themselves with his eccentricities.

The Duchesse de Chaulnes remained two days with Madame de Sévigné admiring her walks and enjoying the beauty and charm of the plantations.

We take this opportunity to give a short description of the Rochers. The mansion when Madame de Sévigné, a young bride, resorted to it for the first time, was more than three hundred years old. It

was—and is, for although great alterations have been made, the principal features still remain—a massive Gothic pile. There are several towers, in one of which was the staircase. The buildings were inclosed by high walls, and the first courtyard contained spacious accommodation for the steward and dependents. Adjoining the château on one side was a large garden, and beyond that an orchard, both facing the east. The park was at this time not so vast as Madame de Sévigné left it. The walks and alleys were numerous and beautiful. There was a mall, which the lady of the manor compared to a gallery; a labyrinth, which she extended and cultivated. Every fresh sojourn of Madame de Sévigné at the Rochers brought forth fresh improvements. While she planted trees, the Abbé de Coulanges built the chapel, which was separated from the mansion by the entrance gate, but which has since been joined to it. Madame de Sévigné had given a name to each of her favourite walks: one was the 'Solitaire,' which measured twelve hundred steps; one extremity of it joined the 'Cloître,' and the other the labyrinth. The 'Infinie' was equally long, and 'L'Humeur de ma Mère' and 'L'Humeur de ma Fille' were so situated as to inspire meditation and melancholy.

There were also wide open spaces all known by different names. The 'Place Coulanges' was celebrated for its echo; the 'Place Madame' is compared to a Belvedere, and whence an extensive view could

be enjoyed; and the 'Cloître' had four rows of magnificent trees. In these walks and the cross-ways were dispersed what were then called 'Brandebourgs,' small pavilions to serve as refuges from the weather. The surrounding country was barren and of severe aspect: a quantity of low gorse covered the fields, and the peasantry partook of the roughness of the soil; they were, and have remained, uncouth and ignorant.

The rooms inhabited by Madame de Sévigné still retain their original appellations. Her 'cabinet,' painted green, that in which was her library, is situated in the tower, whence she overlooked her park. Her bedroom, with an alcove containing two small closets, her dressing-room, and her morning room adjoining the 'green closet,' even her bed has been preserved, the latter being of yellow satin embroidered with coloured silk, gold, and silver. The staircase, of granite, leading to all these rooms is also intact.

It was in this old mansion, and in the amiable company of Madame de Sévigné, that the Duchesse de Chaulnes forgot for a while the restraints and fatigues of her official receptions: her visit to the Rochers, however, compelled Madame de Sévigné to pay a return visit to Vitré, and join in the show and noise of the Etats.

The Duc and Duchesse de Chaulnes received the assembled nobility with splendour and magnificence. Two tables were kept, at one of which presided the duc, and at the other the duchesse. Everything was

served in abundant prodigality. The pyramids of fruit were so high, that on one occasion when Madame de Sévigné was present, one of them was being carried into the room when its summit was struck in the doorway, and it fell to the ground with more than twenty pieces of porcelain, the noise of which was so great that it silenced the violins. The same violins served for a ball, at which danced, with a grace Madame de Sévigné termed incomparable, the Marquis de Locmaria and the Marquis de Coëtlogon. She declares that no gentlemen of the court could approach them, and with a tender recollection she reverts to the perfection of Madame de Grignan's dancing. Minuets and passe-pieds necessitated a little more study and elegance than is needed to indolently and heavily walk through a quadrille.

Monsieur d'Harouys, the treasurer of Brittany, was cousin by marriage to the Marquise de Sévigné, and she describes his house as the Louvre of the Etats. The prodigality of D'Harouys was to be his ruin; but although his reckless squandering of money caused him to end his days in the Bastille, his probity was never suspected.

All the nobility of the province were gathered at Vitré, and Madame de Sévigné, who had never before witnessed the Etats, declares that the whole proceedings formed a really fine spectacle; but she describes their political insignificance by the following lines, where she represents the Etats as resulting in a pretext

for 'presents, fifteen or twenty open tables, constant gambling, perpetual balls, comedies three times a week, and great magnificence. This is the Etats. I am forgetting four hundred barrels of wine that is drunk.'

It was the constant and pointed attention of the Duc and Duchesse de Chaulnes that detained Madame de Sévigné at the Etats. Their civility was so marked, the desire that she should not depart so sincere, that the preference they testified for her, and the honours with which they received her, caused her to admire the amiability of the other ladies of the province. But all this did not replace for her the charms of the Rochers; she returned to her abbé, to La Mousse, to her dog, to her mall, to Pilois, to her workmen with delight. There in tranquillity she resumed her loved occupations, and bared her heart to her dear daughter.

The thoughts of Madame de Sévigné were incessantly turning to the future, from which she hoped changes that would restore peace to her heart. Madame de Grignan, to whom she had expressed these desires, had commended them in a way which provoked the following answer :—

'What you say of the anxieties we have so naturally and so often in regard to the future, and how insensibly our inclinations alter and suit themselves to necessity, is matter for a book like Pascal's. Nothing is so solid, nothing so useful as this kind of meditation. And who are the women of your age who indulge in them?

For my part I know of none. You have a courage and a sense of right that I respect; for myself I am not endowed to the same extent with these qualities, and they fail me principally where my affections are concerned. My words are reasonable: I speak like those who feel rightly, but the intensity of my feelings kills me. For example, I was not mistaken in my presentiment as to what I should suffer at being separated from you. I imagined it as I feel it. I understood that nothing would replace your presence, that the remembrance of you would always be painful to my heart, that I should weary of your absence, that I should be anxious as to your health, and day and night tormented about you. I feel all this as I had foretold. There are several points on which I have not the strength to dwell; my thoughts glide over them, as you so well express. I have not found that the proverb is true in my case, that we have a dress according to the cold. I have none for this cold. Nevertheless I amuse myself, and time passes; my particular case does not alter the truth of the general rule. We almost always fear evils which change their name by the alteration of our thoughts and feelings.'

The anticipation of future happiness is, whatever reason may say to the contrary, one of the greatest solaces in days of sadness. It is hope, it is uncertainty which bids us rise and be of good cheer. It was these that rendered her daughter's absence tolerable to Madame de Sévigné. 'My temper is happy,' says

she, in answer to Madame de Grignan's fears lest her solitude should sadden her. 'Fear not for me the dullness caused by solitude, except the sorrows of my heart, over which I have no control. I am to be pitied for nothing else.' But these sorrows of her heart caused her to experience the most painful impatience if any delay occurred with the letters from Provence. 'I wish it were Friday, that I might have one of your letters, and it is but Wednesday.' All the friendship of the Abbé de Coulanges could not alter that fact so displeasing to Madame de Sévigné, and she truly adds—'If to please me they assured me it was Friday, it would be infinitely worse, for if on that day I received no letter from you, they could not by any possibility reason with me.'

It was in diligent reading that the anxious mother best soothed the agitation of her heart. She perused with delight, perfect comprehension, and sympathy her favourite book the 'Morale' of Nicole. She finds it delightful, and discovers lessons in it on all subjects. 'Nobody has written like them [the Jansénistes]. . . . We are so naturally fond of hearing ourselves and our feelings talked about, that even if we hear them blamed we are charmed.'

Madame de Sévigné at this time heard with great delight of a circumstance touching one of her revered friends at Port-Royal. The venerable Arnauld d'Andilly had, on the occasion of his son, Monsieur de Pomponne, being named Minister of Foreign Affairs,

been received by the king with every imaginable distinction. Madame de Sévigné rejoiced at this public tribute rendered by the monarch to a virtuous man, and she also looked forward with the keenest pleasure to the future possibility of her being, through the influence of Monsieur de Pomponne, of some assistance to Monsieur de Grignan. She did not neglect to write to the 'good man,' as she terms Arnauld d'Andilly; she could do so without being suspected of flattering a rising power. In his answer Arnauld d'Andilly only does her justice when he remarks, that her congratulations, meaning her sympathy for him and his family, had been offered by her twenty years before their prosperity came to them, and some of those years had not been spent in the enjoyment of favour either by himself or his sons.

'You know that I am always rather persistent in my reading,' writes Madame de Sévigné; and in another letter to her daughter she dwells on the work of Monsieur Nicole:—'Everybody is alluded to in it, and for my part I believe it was written purposely for me: I hope I shall profit by it. You are aware that I cannot tolerate that old people should say that I am too old to improve. I could sooner pardon a young person making that speech. Youth is so amiable that one would be forced to adore it if the mind and soul were always as perfect as the body; but it is when we are no longer young that we must aspire to perfection, and strive to gain in good qualities what

we lose in agreeable attractions. It is long since that I made these reflections, and for this reason I am determined every day to labour at my soul, my heart, and my sentiments. This is what I am engaged upon, and what I fill my letters with, not having many other subjects.'

All these letters, serious sometimes, playful at others, admirable always, were at first received by Madame de Grignan at her Château de Grignan, where she spent part of the summer. She left there in the month of October for the Etats at Lambesc, and Madame de Sévigné expresses a desire that the Provençals should treat her as the Bretons had treated Madame de Chaulnes, by offering her a gift of welcome; but she adds—'Though I may desire it, their minds and hearts are dry, and their nature suffers in consequence; the sun absorbs all the moisture which should form goodness and tenderness.'

If Madame de Sévigné had not much confidence in the hearts of the people of Provence, she doubted still more the skill of those who were to attend Madame de Grignan in her expected confinement. The thought of being separated from her daughter at such a time was extremly bitter to Madame de Sévigné. Day and night she dwells on the perils that may attend her, and thinks with a sorrowful heart of the distance between them. Writing of what her imagination causes her to suffer, she says—"I fancy that all I love, all that is precious to me, is going

to escape from me, and this saddens my heart to such an extent that if these thoughts were continually in my mind I should sink under them.'

The Rochers in the month of November could not have cheered the already anxious mother: her many occupations were not sufficient to silence those yearnings of the heart. She was building her chapel, and while surveying its progress, she can but admire that there are men who do for twelve sous what others would not attempt for a thousand pounds. She thinks what a good thing it is that cupidity should exist, to prompt men to run about on scaffolding which holds to nothing.

When it did not rain in torrents, she herself held the young trees that were being planted, and conversed with her gardener Pilois, whose rustic good sense she preferred to the fine talk of many of those who termed themselves gentlemen. Every changeful aspect of Nature was noticed to be admired by Madame de Sévigné, and in speaking of the loveliness of the trees, which still retained green leaves mixed with gold and brown, she remarks that 'it makes an admirable stuff.'

The Rochers were left entirely to its inhabitants: never had Madame de Sévigné seen so few people as in that year; but, as she writes to Madame de Grignan, 'we find evening and morning here like everywhere else.'

# CHAPTER XXIV.

1671-2.

Birth of a son to Madame de Grignan.—Madame de Sévigné's joy at the event.—She returns to Paris.—Her reception there.—Madame Scarron.—Madame de Sévigné advises Monsieur de Grignan on the government of Provence.—Charles de Sévigné with the army.—Illness of the Marquise de la Trousse.—Death of the Chevalier de Grignan.—Health of Cardinal de Retz.—Madame de Sévigné's grief at not being able to visit her daughter.—Death of Madame de la Trousse.—Public events.—The Rhine crossed.—Death of the Duc de Longueville.—Grief of his mother.—Letter of Madame de Sévigné.

AT last Madame de Sévigné received joyful news that lifted a heavy load from her heart. Madame de Grignan had been safely delivered of a son, which much-desired heir had been presented at the font by the representatives of Provence, and named Louis-Provence. The delight of Madame de Sévigné was so intense that she can only exclaim—'If the state I am in at present could continue, life would be too pleasant. But let us enjoy the good of the present hour; troubles will come quick enough.'

Madame de Sévigné only waited for the assurance of her daughter's perfect recovery before starting for Paris; when she was satisfied of the well-being of her

daughter and grandson, she quitted the Rochers with a regret that alarmed her. She started on the 9th of December, and travelled with ease and comfort, calling for her letters at Laval. At Malicorne, the house of the Marquise de Lavardin, she writes a short letter to her daughter, in which she unconsciously repeats the very exhortation of Sainte Chantal to Madame de Sévigné's mother:—'Take care of this dear child [Louis-Provence], but give him to God if you desire that He should allow you to retain His gift.' The tender and maternal heart of Madame de Sévigné appears in the last lines of this letter, where she is looking forward with joy to seeing again her little granddaughter whom she had left in Paris, and says—'You do not think of her, and I am determined to love her.'

On Friday, the 18th of December, Madame de Sévigné found herself in Paris and surrounded with loving attentions by her family and friends. Small-pox being in her own house, she went with her little granddaughter to the house of her cousin Coulanges, where she was received with open arms. Madame de Sévigné declared that she adored Coulanges because he indulged her in talking of Madame de Grignan, to whom he had paid a visit during the summer. It was with the greatest satisfaction that Coulanges saw as his guest the 'Beauty mother,' as he named his cousin. Madame de Sévigné still retained great personal attractions, and seven years

later she was spoken of as still really beautiful; while Madame de Grignan, on the contrary, was early to lose those transcendant charms of which she was so proud.

With great delight Madame de Sévigné found herself in the midst of a circle of friends, and the names of Madame de la Fayette and Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld again occur frequently in her letters; but her real pleasure was in the rearing of Marie-Blanche. 'She kisses me, she knows me, she calls me. I am Mamma to her; and of the one in Provence there is no mention.'

It is no longer a description of the tranquil walks at the Rochers: the correspondence resumes all its worldly and historical interest. The sudden disgrace of Monsieur de Lauzun, but a year before the spoilt favourite of Fortune, and now a prisoner at Pignerol, provokes nearly as much wonder as his rise had excited. 'Vanity of vanities,' adds Madame de Sévigné.

There had been great changes at court during those months of absence of Madame de Sévigné. MONSIEUR, brother of the king, had married a second wife—the German hoyden who lived her rough life and spoke her free speech in the polished and hypocritic court of Louis XIV. The contrast to the other MADAME was great, and those who had loved the young and imprudent princesse saw with regret her place filled so differently. Monsieur de Lauzun had

gone to join Fouquet, the star of Mademoiselle de la Vallière was declining, that of Madame de Montespan in the zenith, while that of Madame Scarron was in the ascendant.

It is not our purpose to recount the loves and gallantries of Louis XIV, but as Madame Scarron was a friend of Madame de Sévigné, her singular destiny must be glanced at.

Françoise d'Aubigné, of Huguenot parents, was left an orphan at an early age. A convent now became her home, and it was there she abjured the faith in which she had been brought up, and embraced Catholicism, of which she became the persecuting champion. Madame de Neuillant for a time gave her shelter. It was to escape the persecutions she suffered in that house, that at sixteen, beautiful, intelligent, and perhaps ambitious, the young girl consented to unite herself to a deformed cripple, to an obscene writer, in a word, to Scarron. Her manners were serious and reserved, and in spite of her singular position she inspired respect. Her protector—we cannot term him her husband—regarded her as his daughter, and for the sake of her youth reformed his life and manners as best he could. That he was kind and generous to her there is no doubt, but their means were so strictly limited to what Scarron earned by his pen, that when he died his widow found herself penniless.

Madame Scarron was of an insinuating and captivating disposition. The great ladies to whom Scarron,

a general favourite, had made her known, took a fancy to her, and in a kind of semi-dependent position she found herself on an intimate footing in the Hôtels de Richelieu and d'Albret. St.-Simon remarks that at that time the absence of bells rendered it necessary for ladies to have with them some gentlewomen whose society would amuse them, and whose services they might employ. This was the situation of Madame Scarron, and though she was admitted to the intimacy of the highest in the land, it was not as an equal. Her pecuniary position after the death of her husband was more than precarious. She solicited the continuation of a pension that had been paid to him, and when in possession of two thousand francs a year, thought herself out of the reach of want. That Madame Scarron had merits of no common kind, that her sedate beauty, her dignified manners, as well as her intelligence and agreeableness won for her the affection of many, is certain. When she received the 'singular honour,' as Madame de Sévigné terms it, of being the governess and guardian of the children of Madame de Montespan and Louis XIV, she renounced her dependent life to give her whole time to her young charges. What influence she acquired over them was seen in after years. Loved by Madame de Montespan, admitted to all the secrets of that existence, at once so envied and so troubled, Madame Scarron was not favourably regarded by Louis XIV, and it was only after an intercourse of many years

that he began to appreciate her, when was laid the foundations of a fortune without parallel.

It was in 1671 that Madame de Sévigné for the first time makes any allusion to the rising power of Madame Scarron. After the death of the Duchesse de Montausier, the post of dame d'honneur was given to the Duchesse de Richelieu, who used her influence to obtain for Madame Scarron the position which served as a first step to her favour. The same year, Louise de la Vallière, as a drooping flower, was still at court, Madame de Montespan queen of all, and if it was suspected that Madame Scarron's voice had weight, no dream of what she was to become ever crossed the minds of her friends. Her age, the austere virtue she professed, her disgust of the court and its intrigues, must have banished as wild any idea of Madame Scarron sharing the grandeur of Louis XIV.

'We sup every day with Madame Scarron,' writes Madame de Sévigné to her daughter. 'She is amiable, and has a singular rectitude of judgment. It is wonderful to hear her talk about the dreadful agitations of a certain country she knows so well. The despairing moments passed by D'Heudicourt, when her place appeared so miraculous; the continuous fury of the little Lauzun; the gloomy melancholy and weariness of the ladies of St.-Germain, of whom perhaps the most envied [Madame de Montespan] is not exempt: it is curious to hear her discoursing on all this. These conversations lead us sometimes very far;

from morality to morality, sometimes Christian, sometimes political. We often speak of you: she appreciates your intelligence and your manners; so when you come here again, do not fear that you will be out of fashion.'

The affairs of the court were not the only subjects that interested Madame de Sévigné; those of Provence were still more in her mind. Two adverse parties were now formed in the province; one had its natural head in Monsieur de Grignan, the other was supported by Forbin-Janson, Bishop of Marseilles. Madame de Sévigné, whose judgment was always sound and unbiassed, had tried, but tried in vain, to calm her daughter's irritation on the subject. She saw how disastrous might become a conflict between two men of so elevated a rank, and how profitable to them and all would be their union. But Madame de Grignan's temper was imperious, and she rather courted than avoided the contest.

At the assembled Etats, Monsieur de Grignan had not met with that submissive obedience the king required. Severe repression had been commanded, and Madame de Sévigné pleads the cause of the Provençals with her son-in-law. She bids her daughter tell her husband not to act hastily on the rigorous orders he had received; to serve his king, but consider also the interests of those he was governing. She advises further, that he, as a man who best knows the real state of affairs, should write to the king, and

'we must try for this once to obtain a pardon from his goodness.'

The Comte de Grignan took a right view of Madame de Sévigné's advice, and gave to her counsel the attention it deserved. The pardon of the monarch, if not so complete as might have been expected, having been obtained, Monsieur de Grignan reaped the glory for conduct inspired in him by one who embraced his interests with as much ardour as did his own wife, and viewed events with a cooler and better judgment.

Madame de Grignan had early acquired great influence over her husband, and Madame de Sévigné, aware of the importance of all she wrote to her, therefore insisted in warm terms on the happiness and need of peace. The Bishop of Uzès, uncle of Monsieur de Grignan, was in Paris, and shared in the wishes of Madame de Sévigné and in all her opinions.

Charles de Sévigné had joined the army at the latter end of 1671, and Madame de Sévigné very truly says, that now her grandchild is the only consolation of her life. 'I wish that you could see how she loves me,' writes she in January, 1672; 'how she calls me, how she kisses me. She is not pretty, but she is pleasing. The tone of her voice is charming; she is white, she is fair; in a word, I love her.'

The care Madame de Sévigné took to inform her

daughter of all that might please or in any way touch her feelings was not repaid in the same manner. The Marquise de la Trousse, Madame de Sévigné's aunt, and whom she dearly loved, was dangerously ill of the affection which ultimately caused her death. Her niece was to her a kind and vigilant nurse, and, as we shall presently see, a most devoted one. Although in her letters to Provence Madame de Sévigné frequently expresses the pain and grief she felt at her aunt's state of health, no sympathetic answer came; and she is compelled to write — 'I pray you, my daughter, to often introduce some kind word for my aunt; it is a consolation to her in her continual sufferings.' Every consolation it was in the power of Madame de Sévigné to give was offered to the sufferer, and that to the last moment of her life; Madame de Sévigné's heart needed no reminder.

Another person, dear to Madame de Sévigné for her daughter's sake, was lying at that time near the point of death. The Chevalier de Grignan, called the 'beau Grignan,' and whom of all her brothers-in-law the comtesse preferred, had been struck by that fatal scourge, the small-pox. Madame de Sévigné, who anxiously followed the course the disease was taking, trusted in his youth, and hoped against the fatal forebodings spoken at the commencement of the attack. The suspense, however, did not last long; on the 6th of February, the Chevalier de Grignan expired, and it is with feelings of real distress that Madame de

Sévigné informs her daughter of this event. What fortune he had he left to his eldest brother, and this conduct no doubt aided Madame de Sévigné in thinking well of him—where that daughter was concerned she became blind to every other interest.

The year had not begun prosperously for Madame de Sévigné: her dear daughter still absent, her son with the army, Madame de la Trousse dangerously ill, the death of the Chevalier de Grignan, and now the health of the Cardinal de Retz, to whom she was always so sincerely attached, was causing fears to his friends. Above all was the hope deferred of that journey to Provence she was longing to take, with which obstacles that her conscience would not allow her to put aside were constantly interfering. To Madame de Grignan's insinuation, that she was mistress of her actions, she answered that it was true she was so; but 'life is full of bitterness,' and that of being in Paris when Madame de Grignan was at Aix was one that time could not sweeten.

To the natural desire Madame de Sévigné had of joining her daughter was added a strong wish to be able, with her good abbé, to be of some assistance to her in arranging her affairs. Madame de Grignan had not been married three years, and already embarrassments had begun. Monsieur de Grignan bore the title of Lieutenant-governor of Provence, but the Duc de Vendôme received the high emoluments of Governor. Forced to maintain the dignity of his office, and by

his tastes doing that beyond what was necessary, Monsieur de Grignan naturally experienced difficulties, which were increased by his passion for gambling and by his reckless extravagance.

From the first hour that Madame de Sévigné—the scales fallen from her eyes—got an insight of the true position of the Comte de Grignan, she urged, with the warmth of affection and experience, that order, without which no fortune is truly great, should rule in their house. What she condemns repeatedly is gambling—the fortune of a few and the ruin of a host; moreover, neither Monsieur nor Madame de Grignan were fortunate, and as early as May, 1671, Madame de Sévigné warns her daughter thus:—'I hear on different sides that you both lose all you stake. Why, why, such ill luck? why that perpetual little rain I have always found so inconvenient?' Nearly a year after she adds:—

'Continued ill luck provokes and offends. We hate thus to be mocked by Fortune. The advantage others have over us is humiliating, though it be only a trifle. My love, Nicole expresses that so well. I hate Fortune, and am well convinced that she is blind to treat you in such a fashion. If she had but one eye, you would not be so unlucky.' And again a month afterwards:—

'You have wonderful ill-luck; you always lose. This swallows up a great deal of money. I cannot believe you have enough not to feel these continual

losses. Take my advice, do not persist. I feel more than you do that perpetual ill-luck. Remember that you have spent all that money without diverting yourself. Quite the contrary; you have given five or six thousand francs to bore yourself. My child, I am getting too earnest; you must say, like Tartuffe, "It is an excess of zeal."'

While Madame de Sévigné was so anxious regarding the fortune of Madame de Grignan, and so fearful of those trifles which at last wear away even the rock, she did not fail to lavish on her presents of every description; books and elegant trifles for husband or wife, and on the 4th of March Madame de Sévigné sends her daughter a pearl necklace which 'surpasses,' says she, 'all presents, past and future.' It was a single row, worth twelve thousand écus. Madame de Sévigné had bought it at the sale of the effects of the Venetian Ambassador, her now 'defunct neighbour,' as she terms him, and it is with delight she begs her daughter to look at the pearls, weigh them, and see how they become her. She herself says that she had never seen such fine pearls, and prides herself on her choice because Madame de Grignan is to profit by it. When the thanks came she would hardly accept them.

'We strive to amuse our dear cardinal,' she writes, speaking of Retz, and informs Madame de Grignan that Corneille, Boileau, and Molière have read to him their newest works, she being present the while. She adds,—'It is all they can do for his service, and it is

not little.' But she passes rapidly over this to dwell on the affection Retz has for Madame de Grignan, and the regret he feels at her absence:—

'I have a thousand compliments to pay to you from Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld, from Madame de la Fayette, and from his eminence;' but for him, this dear cardinal, this kind uncle, Madame de Grignan had no sympathy either; and no solicitation of her mother could bring her to act towards him as it would have been both her duty and to her interest.

In the midst of her attendance on her dear invalids, Madame de Sévigné was receiving from her daughter letters warmly urging her to execute her promised journey. According to Madame de Grignan's view, the illness of Madame de la Trousse was probably not of a character to make it imperious that her niece should not leave her; but though Madame de Sévigné repeats with affection and sincerity that she lives but in the hope of a journey to Provence, she cannot take it upon herself to abandon Madame de la Trousse at such a moment. She knew that her aunt could not recover, and she remained in the painful hesitation which the changeful symptoms caused her—at one moment she believed Madame de la Trousse might linger on for months to come, and that she might go; the next moment she fears the end is near, but at all times she feels keenly for the sufferings and protracted agony of one whom she has loved and who loves her in return.

The Marquise de la Trousse was admirably cared

for by her two unmarried daughters, Mademoiselle de la Trousse and Mademoiselle de Méri: their cousin saw with compassion their filial tenderness and devotion, comparing their conduct with that of their brother, the Marquis de la Trousse, who waited till his mother was at the point of death before professing for her any affection. On the tender letters he then wrote to his mother, Madame de Sévigné makes the following comments:—'I do not much value those affections of the death-bed, and for myself I thank those who would only begin to love me then. My child, we must love during life, as you do so well; we must make calm and happy, and not fill with bitterness and anguish, the existence of those who cherish us. It is too late to change at the point of death.'

These words of Madame de Sévigné seem to suggest a hidden hesitation as to her daughter's conduct. One feels that, do what she will, she does not experience that perfect security in Madame de Grignan's affection that she professes. Her words are as much of warning as of praise; to presume that people are capable of great or good actions, to express to them that conviction, is, we believe, a powerful motive to urge them to act according to our wishes; pride comes to the rescue, and helps on those who otherwise might have halted on the road. This tactic, if we may call it so, is frequent with Madame de Sévigné: she always takes it for granted that her daughter does or says what is right, and thus, without appearing to lecture

or reprove, she points out her course. In the many instances when she proffers advice, she does so timidly, and as it were declining any right to interfere, but never hesitating when she believes it to be her duty. The question of extravagance is that to which she returns most frequently, and she does so certainly without any encouragement, for in a letter to her daughter she says:—'Tell me, however, if my counsels displease you both, for if they do they will be useless, and I should not be in a hurry to say displeasing things to you. Answer me sincerely on this subject.'

Whatever may have been the answer of Madame de Grignan, her mother never gave up the sacred privilege of speaking as a parent to her child, and if at times she undoubtedly flatters her—as she ought not—yet on certain points, her truth, her honesty, her sincerity were stronger than her partiality.

The protracted illness of Madame de la Trousse keeping Madame de Sévigné in Paris, at the end of April she entered her new house in the Rue St.-Anastase, in which she carefully reserved an apartment for her daughter, whom she looked forward to bring back with her from Provence, at least for a time. 'You bid me not think of you in settling in my new house: I think of no one else.'

These little pleasures of preparing the abode she hoped to see one day inhabited by Madame de Grignan could but for a moment divert her from all

her many cares. For her son she was beginning to feel the keenest anxiety, as the war against the Dutch —the campaign led by the king — now appeared terribly earnest. Nearly every man in France had joined the army, and Paris was deserted. The summer had come, and not even Livry, with all its beauty, could soothe the mind of Madame de Sévigné.

The constant contemplation of the dreadful sufferings of her aunt had upon Madame de Sévigné's imagination the most vivid effect, and it is what makes her write to her daughter—'We were saying the other day, that the only real evil in life is great suffering; the rest is in our imagination, and depends on the manner in which we look at things. All other afflictions find a remedy either in time, or moderation, or strength of mind; reflection can lighten them, or religion, or philosophy. As to great sufferings, they hold both body and soul. The thought of God causes them to be borne with patience, but does not lighten them.

'This speech has the appearance of coming straight from the Faubourg St.-Germain [from Madame de la Fayette], but in truth it is my poor aunt, who by her extreme sufferings gave us the subject for it, and she does not allow any other afflictions in life to be compared to hers.'

Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld and Madame de la Fayette, whom Madame de Sévigné saw every day, were not calculated to suggest to her more cheerful

reflections. Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld was a constant sufferer from gout, and Madame de la Fayette was never well two days together, being subject to ailments of every kind. Madame de Sévigné says, in reference to those two friends—'We sometimes have conversations together of such sadness, that there seems nothing left to be done but to bury us.'

One bright and dear object offered itself, however, to Madame de Sévigné, and every day she seems to dwell with more force on her fondness for her little grandchild. She pictures to the absent mother the most smiling images of happy babyhood:—'Her complexion, her neck, her little body is admirable. She does a hundred little things: she talks, she caresses, she gives slaps, she makes the sign of the cross, she demands pardon, she curtseys, she kisses the hand, she shrugs her shoulders, she dances, she flatters, she takes hold of the chin; in a word, she is charming in everything. I amuse myself with her for hours together. I will not allow this treasure to die. I was telling you this the other day; I cannot imagine how it is possible to help loving one's daughter.' More than once, leaving aside other occupations, the fond grandmother dwells on the beauty and qualities of her little charge.

While Madame de Sévigné was leading that life of kindness and anxiety, Madame de Grignan was, as a queen, travelling through the province ruled by her husband. Her tour extended as far as Monaco, where

she went to visit the daughter of the Maréchal de Grammont, the celebrated Madame de Monaco, who had been one of the most admired beauties of the court of Louis XIV. No very great sympathy could have existed between her and Madame de Grignan, their character and mode of life being so essentially different. But they met as exiles in a foreign country, and were reciprocally happy in conversing together of that court at which they had both shone so brightly.

The progress of Madame de Grignan was attended by a pomp at which her mother dared not rejoice, well knowing at what price such display was purchased. On this occasion again she ventures a word of warning, to be, alas! neglected. Madame de Grignan, in writing to her mother an account of her journey, tells her that the powerful perfumes of Provence had at last disgusted her, and that a bad smell would even be welcome as a change. Madame de Sévigné remarks upon this morbid fancy of her daughter, that—

'Nothing is more extraordinary than the state you have been in; and yet it is quite natural: the most unwholesome thing is to sleep in a perfumed atmosphere. . . . You were telling me a short time ago that there are no delights that do not lose that name when abundance and facility accompany them. I own to having a desire to tempt the experience.'

To see the enchanted land where Madame de Grignan reigned, was the ardent wish of Madame de

Sévigné, and alluding to the causes which kept her back when she so longed to depart, she remarks—'I always think there are certain things very badly arranged in the events of our lives. They are as large stones in the way, too heavy to be moved. I think we shall pass over this one, but it will not be without difficulty.'

Madame de Sévigné had decided, despite the lingering illness of her aunt, to leave her and undertake the long-looked-for journey, but such a proceeding went against her heart, and she says—'It is something to admire that God should put a counterbalance to the joy I shall have in going to you. I shall leave my aunt dying: this thought wounds my heart; and I shall carry with me a perpetual anxiety for my son. Ah! this is the world indeed! You say we must lose the habit of wishing for anything; add to that, and of being quite satisfied. It is a state not reserved for mortals.'

Madame de la Trousse having become much worse, and her end appearing to be close at hand, her kind niece, whatever she looked to beyond, could not contemplate without much sorrow the approaching dissolution. She quiets her daughter's pressing haste, and adds a few words which explain her fortitude and strength in many temptations:—'You know how I hate remorse; it would have been a perpetual weight on my mind not to have rendered the last duties to my poor aunt. I omit nothing I think I owe her at such

a melancholy time.' Madame de Sévigné's only repining at the long and painful delay is—'Admire my misfortune; it is sufficient for me to desire a thing to find obstacles.' But, clear above all, in spite of regrets, in spite of impatience, shines that satisfaction of having behaved as her affection and duty prompted her, and in having silenced on that occasion any selfish yearnings, to listen only to the voice that bade her not forsake in her dying moments one who had been the friend of her youth.

At last, on the 30th of June, Madame de la Trousse expired peaceably in her sleep, Madame de Sévigné having left her side only a few hours before. The poignant grief of the poor daughters is vividly described, and the real sorrow of Madame de Sévigné is also expressed in words touching and true. Then her heart bounds at the thought that now she can fulfil her desire of joining her daughter. All her preparations had long been made, and having placed the little Marie-Blanche d'Adhémar under the most watchful guardianship her care could suggest, she left Paris on the 13th of July.

Before accompanying Madame de Sévigné on her journey, we must take a glance at the contents of some of her letters in which she described to her daughter the great and stirring events which were astonishing the whole of Europe.

The campaign of 1672, commanded by the king in person, was destined to crush entirely those proud

Low Countries which would not bow to the will of the omnipotent Louis. Monsieur le Prince, his son Monsieur le Duc, his nephew the handsome Duc de Longueville, commanded and served in that expedition. Sévigné was also with the army, and in the expectation of the battles which must be fought, his mother, as we have seen, was anxiously eager for news of him.

Suddenly every one in Paris, and soon after the whole of France, learnt with astonishment and wonder that the Rhine had been crossed by the army under Monsieur le Prince. It was victory—it was peace! but to the minds of many it was too dearly bought by the death of the young Duc de Longueville, who through his impetuosity and rashness had met his fate. Monsieur de Marsillac, son of the Duc de la Rochefoucauld, had been wounded, and his other son, the Chevalier de Marsillac, had been killed. The prince whose death was causing such emotion was that son of Madame de Longueville born at the Hôtel de Ville in the days of the Fronde, and alluding to what Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld felt on this occasion, Madame de Sévigné writes to her daughter—'his tears came from his heart.'

Madame de Sévigné was present when Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld received news so full of sadness, and after the first moment given to sympathizing with him she rushed to inquire as to her son, and is reminded that he is with the army of the king, not with that of the Prince de Condé. Her maternal

anxiety relieved, her mind reverts immediately to the catastrophe which was occupying every one, and this is what she writes:—'You have never seen Paris in the state it is in. Every one is mourning, or fears having to be so. Madame de Nogent is beside herself. They tell me it is heart-breaking to see Madame de Longueville. I have not seen her, but this is what I know. Mademoiselle de Vertus * had two days before returned to Port-Royal, where she is nearly always. They went to fetch her, with Monsieur Arnauld, to disclose the terrible news to Madame de Longueville. Mademoiselle de Vertus had only to show herself: that hurried return boded something alarming. In fact, as soon as she appeared: "Ah, mademoiselle, how is my brother?" Her thoughts could go no further. "Madame, he bears his wound well." "There has been a battle; and my son?" No answer was given. "Ah, mademoiselle, my son, my dear child; answer me, is he dead?" "Madame, I have no words to answer you." "Ah, my dear son, did he die immediately? Did he not have a single moment? Ah, my God, what a sacrifice!" and upon this she falls on her bed, and all that the most violent anguish can do, and by convulsions, by fainting, by mortal silence, by stifled sobs, by bitter tears, by cries to Heaven, and by the most heart-rending lamentations, she has felt everything. . . .

'There is in the world a man [Monsieur de la

* Catherine-Françoise de Bretagne, one of the recluses of Port-Royal.

Rochefoucauld] hardly less afflicted, and I have it in my head that if they had both met in those first moments, and there had been no one with them, all other feelings would have given place to tears and sobs; it is a dream.'

The Duc de Longueville by his charming manners had rendered himself extremely popular, and it was not only by those to whom he was attached by near and tender ties that he was mourned. He had solid virtues. 'No one was so near perfection,' says Madame de Sévigné, and we see clearly that in describing the agony experienced by Madame de Longueville, the vivid imagination of Madame de Sévigné had been inspired by her motherly heart, and every chord in her soul vibrated in unison with those lamentations and cries to Heaven spoken by one who had lost her child. It is the privilege, and at the same time the curse, of those who conceive events easily and vividly, not to be able to paint a scene of sorrow without inwardly feeling an echo of the voice they call up, as in their heart a glad image leaves also a ray of sunshine. The soul of those whose imagination is strong, receives the impression, be it good or evil, of that moment; as when a hand strikes a note, one instant only is the sound heard, but the chord has vibrated. It is those passing emotions that give to verses, that impart to painting the life which Pygmalion sighed to see bestowed on the work of his hands.

And now Madame de Sévigné had forgotten for a time everything unconnected with her journey. It is in rapturous terms she announces to her daughter that she is about to join her, and though the last letters of Madame de Grignan do not seem to have satisfied the mother, yet her whole desire tends to embrace her child. Alluding to the long delay of her journey, Madame de Sévigné says—'As long illnesses wear out affliction, so long anticipation wears out joy. You will have exhausted all the pleasure of seeing me before I come, and when I arrive you will be quite accustomed to my presence.'

# CHAPTER XXV.

1672–4.

Departure of Madame de Sévigné for Provence.—Her reception at Lyons.—Arrival at Grignan.—Correspondence with Madame de Coulanges, Madame de la Fayette, and Bussy.—Madame de Sévigné after a stay of fourteen months leaves Grignan for Paris.—Her grief.—Visits Bourbilly, and is received at Epoisses by the Comte and Comtesse de Guitaut. — Reflections on Madame de Sévigné's correspondence with her daughter.—Monsieur de Grignan lays siege to Orange.—Anxiety of Madame de Sévigné.—Coldness of her daughter.—Religious feeling of Madame de Sévigné.—Reflections on the moral standard of the seventeenth century.—Madame de Grignan announces her intention of visiting Paris.

MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ was accompanied by her uncle, the Abbé de Coulanges, who, in spite of contrary advice, had not hesitated for his dear niece's sake, to hazard a journey to Provence in the middle of summer, and by the Abbé de la Mousse. Monsieur du Gué, the father of Madame de Coulanges, and Intendant of Lyons, was to welcome Madame de Sévigné in that town.

At Auxerre, three days after leaving Paris, she writes a short letter to Madame de Grignan, and says —'We travel rather seriously. Monsieur de Coulanges

would have been needful to enliven us. . . . To be gay, one must be with those that are so; you know that I suit myself to others, but I invent nothing.'

At Lyons, Madame de Sévigné was received with delight by Madame de Coulanges, and with every mark of consideration and friendship by the intendant and his wife. They were at great pains to amuse her in every way, and show her all that could interest or divert her. Madame de Coulanges insisted on her remaining a day longer than she had intended, and her solicitations were so pressing, that in spite of her impatience, Madame de Sévigné yielded. She had while at Lyons made the acquaintance of Monsieur de Grignan's sister, the Comtesse de Rochebonne, whose extraordinary likeness to her brother had startled her. 'It is Monsieur de Grignan as a very amiable woman,' she writes.

On the 30th of July, after a separation of a year and seven months, the mother and daughter were together under the same roof, and with her kind Bien Bon, with her faithful La Mousse, Madame de Sévigné had the joy of finding herself at Grignan, in the house of and in the company of that daughter, the thought of whom had never left her a moment since the hour they had parted.

The correspondence is now interrupted for the fourteen months Madame de Sévigné remained with her daughter. With the exception of a few, the letters

she then wrote to her son and her many correspondents have not been preserved.

The day after leaving Lyons, where she had been so affectionately treated, Madame de Sévigné writes to Madame de Coulanges, who on the 1st of August acknowledges the receipt of two letters. She informs Madame de Sévigné, in a style also easy and charming, of her occupations at Lyons, of her attendance on her mother, and of the attentions she received from the Marquis de Villeroy. Le Charmant, as she calls him, and as he was surnamed, was suffering a temporary disgrace, and had been banished from the court. Madame de Coulanges had received a pressing invitation to join Madame de Sévigné at Grignan, and she expresses her hope of being able to do so ; at the same time she hints that the Marquis de Villeroy intends going there with the Comte de Rochebonne. As this great conqueror of hearts had been at one time supposed to be under the charm of Mademoiselle de Sévigné, it is very probable that the marquise did not wish for a presence that might awaken the malignity of those ever on the watch to imagine or surprise the secrets of hearts. However, neither one nor the other visited Grignan, and it is from Lyons that Madame de Coulanges bade good-bye to the inhabitants of Grignan. She says gracefully—'In going from here I feel the relief in not having to leave you.'

Corbinelli had joined the Comtesse de Grignan and Madame de Sévigné in Provence, and he is in-

cluded in the regrets of Madame de Coulanges, who bids him return to Paris to become her confidant.

Once in the capital, Madame de Coulanges resumed the correspondence, and gives to Madame de Sévigné all the news of the court and town she knew would amuse her. She informs her that the existence of Madame Scarron is a mystery to every one; that she does not see one of her friends, and that having received a letter from her, she dared not say so for fear of inquiries. The truth was, that Madame Scarron was bringing up in secrecy Madame de Montespan's children, and she had taken her trust in such earnest, that with her own hands she had prepared the rooms they inhabited, fearing the indiscretion of the workmen she might employ.

'The Princesse d'Harcourt has appeared at court without rouge,' she writes. This was the outward sign of devotion; as soon as a woman determined to embrace religion she publicly announced her intention by appearing with her natural complexion: it was a mortification beyond everything else, and the sure road to heaven. Madame de Sévigné ridicules these pretences of sanctity which took so singular a form; but at the same time, when she believes a real conversion has been effected, and that one who belonged entirely to the world and its vanities has given herself to God's service, she speaks of it in terms of eulogy which leave nothing to be added, as we shall soon see when she alludes to Madame de Marans.

Madame de la Fayette was another correspondent of Madame de Sévigné, but her letters were short, and she does not fill them with those little nothings in which Madame de Coulanges delighted. 'Do not measure our friendship by my letters,' she says. 'I shall love you quite as much in writing to you a page a month, as you will love me in sending me ten every week.' 'My taste for writing to any one is passed.'

The great excuse for Madame de la Fayette was her constant suffering from headache. Her delicate health debarred her from every enjoyment in life, and when after going to Chantilly, which she describes as 'the most delightful place under the sun,' she wants to give an account of it to Madame de Sévigné, she says—'If I had not such a headache, I would tell you all about it.'

Charles de Sévigné was in Paris, and both the friends of his mother saw him often, and speak of him with praise. The little Marie-Blanche d'Adhémar was also cared for by Madame de Coulanges, who in giving news of her to Madame de Sévigné adds—'Madame Scarron does not show herself; I am extremely sorry for it. This year I have none of those I love.'

At Grignan, Madame de Sévigné resumed her oft-interrupted correspondence with her cousin Bussy, and the letters are written in the familiar and friendly style of other times; but after one or two had been exchanged there was again silence for a whole year.

Bussy neglected none of his interests, and he knew

that Madame de Sévigné had many friends, some in power like Pomponne. At that time, although he repeatedly states the contrary, and protests his perfect resignation to his fate, Bussy was striving with greater ardour than ever to obtain his pardon. Madame de Sévigné in Paris could serve him, but at Grignan she could do nothing, and he was therefore less anxious to remind her of his existence.

The months Madame de Sévigné remained in Provence were not wholly spent at Grignan. At the end of December, 1672, the lieutenant-governor had been obliged to preside at the Etats at Lambesc, and the delicate state of health of Madame de Grignan not permitting her to accompany her husband, Madame de Sévigné went with her son-in-law. On the morning fixed for her journey back to Grignan, torrents of rain impeded her departure, and she gives her daughter a graphic account of the confusion :—

'When we reckon without Providence, my dear daughter, we risk being wrong in our calculations. I was ready this morning at eight; I had taken my coffee, heard mass, wished good-bye to all, the mules were laden; their bells reminded me that I must get into my litter; my room was full of people, who were begging me not to go, because for some days it has rained a great deal, and since yesterday without intermission, and even now. I boldly resisted all that was said, wishing to do honour to the resolution I had taken, and which I had announced to you by yes-

terday's post, that I should be with you on Thursday ; when, on a sudden, Monsieur de Grignan, in a yellow dressing-gown, spoke to me so seriously of the folly of my undertaking, saying that my mules would fall over the precipices, that the men would be wet and unable to help me, that in a moment I changed my mind, and gave way entirely to his remonstrances. Therefore boxes brought back, mules unharnessed, maids and valets dry themselves after having only crossed the yard, and a messenger is sent to you, knowing well what is your affection and your anxiety.'

Madame de Sévigné also took advantage of her sojourn in Provence to visit Marseilles, where, in spite of the still existing differences between her son-in-law and the archbishop, she was received by the latter with every imaginable distinction, as if the venerable prelate were desirous of proving that his quarrels with Monsieur de Grignan were of a purely local character, and that even their animosity could not make him forget what was due to Madame de Sévigné's merit. Unfortunately she had now espoused her daughter's prejudices with such violence that she put a false interpretation on the conduct of Forbin-Janson, and wrote about him to her friends in power as would a person who saw only Monsieur de Grignan's interest, and condemned without mercy all those who opposed him.

After that long and delightful residence with her daughter, the day of separation came, that day

which from the first moment of their re-union Madame de Sévigné could not look forward to without terror. It had been her constant hope to have her daughter return with her, but the duties of Monsieur de Grignan did not allow of it. When Madame de Sévigné started on her journey back, the same day Madame de Grignan left her home for Salon and Aix. At Montélimar, five leagues only from Grignan, the distressed mother writes :—

'Montélimar, Thursday, Oct. 5.

'This is a terrible day, my dearest daughter; I own to you that I am exhausted. I have left you in a position that adds to my grief. I think of all the steps you take, and of all those I make, and how many are needful, walking always in that way, ere we can ever meet. Near you my heart is at rest; it is its natural state, and the only one that can satisfy it. What occurred this morning causes me keen pain, and makes me feel a heart-breaking, for which your philosophy will explain the reasons; I have felt those reasons, and shall feel them long. My heart and imagination are filled with nothing but you, of whom I cannot think without weeping; and as I think of you always, the state I am in is unbearable. As my grief is excessive, I trust it may not last long with such violence. I search for you always, and I find that everything fails me because I have lost you. My eyes, that have met you so often for fourteen months, rest upon you

no longer. The agreeable time I have lately spent renders the present very painful until I am a little accustomed to it; but I shall never be sufficiently so not to ardently wish to see and embrace you again. I must not hope better for the future than for the past. I know what your absence caused me to suffer; I shall be still more to be pitied, because I have got myself imprudently into the habit of seeing you. I fancy I did not embrace you enough at parting; I did not tell you sufficiently how satisfied I am with your tenderness; I did not recommend you enough to Monsieur de Grignan; and I did not thank him adequately for his civility and the affection he has for me. . . . In a word, my daughter, I live for you only; may God do me the grace to make me love Him some day as I love you.'

From Lyons, where she was received by the Comte and Comtesse de Rochebonne, she writes again:—

'I had always hoped to bring you back with me; you know with what arguments and with what a tone you cut me short as to that. Everything had to give way to the force of your reasoning, and I had to take the part of admiring you; but understand, that the least natural thing in the world is for me to return to Paris alone. If you can come there this winter, it will be a joy and consolation to me; and in that case I shall only grieve over a three months' separation, as you begged me to do; but I am leaving you, the distance between us increases, and the future is uncertain.'

Madame de Sévigné before returning to Paris was to make a short stay in Burgundy, and she warned Bussy not to miss being there at the time. On the 16th of October, 1673, she dates her first letter from Bourbilly, 'the old mansion of her fathers,' and says—'I find my beautiful fields, my little river, my magnificent woods, and my fine mill in the same place I left them. There have been here people of greater worth than me, yet after Grignan, after having left you, I am dying of dullness.'

Bussy was not in Burgundy to greet his cousin in the home of their mutual ancestors, he being at the time in Paris, but a neighbour, who was also a friend, the Comte de Guitaut, and his wife, received Madame de Sévigné with every demonstration that could please and touch her. Epoisses, the château of the Comte de Guitaut, was close to Bourbilly, and in Paris the comte was also the neighbour of Madame de Sévigné. He was a man of pleasing aspect, quick, and clever. Madame de Sévigné often wrote to him, and did so as to one who could understand her well. His wife was a woman of solid sense, and Madame de Sévigné, in what concerned the management of Bourbilly, solicited her advice more than once.

On her arrival at Bourbilly Madame de Sévigné found letters from the Comte de Guitaut, begging to be early informed of her arrival, and the next morning, through pouring rain, he came to bid her welcome. A few hours after, to Madame de Sévigné's surprise,

arrived the Comtesse de Guitaut and the Comtesse de Fiesque; this last lady, the intimate friend and companion of MADEMOISELLE, was better known as Madame la Comtesse. It was said of her, that she was never older than eighteen: she was wild and thoughtless to her last day. Having lost a daughter, some one remarked that the comtesse was extremely embarrassed by an affliction, to which Bussy answered —'She loves joy quite as much as her children.' Seeing her at Bourbilly, Madame de Sévigné exclaims—'And to see the comtesse at Bourbilly, can you well understand that? and handsomer, younger, and more magnificent and gay than you ever saw her. . . . We spoke of news,' and from her Burgundian retreat Madame de Sévigné sends her daughter the latest tidings from court.

As soon as Madame de Sévigné had settled the business that had brought her to Bourbilly, she yielded to the appeals of the Guitauts, and paid them a visit at Epoisses. She found the house of 'surprising size and beauty,' and says that one might pass many days in it without experiencing weariness. Her cousins, the Toulongeons, had been asked to meet her, and with Madame de Chatelus and Monsieur de Bonneval they formed a complete party. After three days of such good company, Madame de Sévigné started for Paris, where she was hastening with impatience in order to receive her daughter's letters more regularly.

At Auxerre, her next stage on the way, Madame de Sévigné wrote to her kind hosts at Epoisses a letter of thanks in which she remarks that the welcome assisted her to bear and dispel the sadness she had brought from Provence: it is always and ever Madame de Grignan who is uppermost in her mind.

Every time after the mother and daughter had been together there appear in the first letters traces of those slight differences which caused such pain to Madame de Sévigné: on this subject she writes to Madame de Grignan:—'If my susceptibility has sometimes made my friendship disagreeable, I beg you, my daughter, to excuse it in favour of the cause. I shall guard that cause all my life, and I trust that without doing it any harm, I shall become less imperfect than I am. I try every day to profit by my reflections, and if I could, as I have told you sometimes, live but two hundred years, I fancy I might be a very admirable person.'

Madame de Sévigné's care is always to take upon herself the blame which her daughter only too well deserved. It is when her heart is wounded too bitterly that she reveals the truth, and discloses the sufferings she experienced. The cold nature of Madame de Grignan was the last that could satisfy one whose tenderness found nothing too great and nothing too small on which to manifest it.

Once more in Paris, the principal occupation of

Madame de Sévigné is to busy herself with her daughter's affairs, and she says—'If you ask me what is talked of in Paris, I shall tell you they speak only of Monsieur and Madame de Grignan, of their business, of their interests, of their return.'

Monsieur and Madame de Coulanges, Madame de la Fayette, Madame Scarron, Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld, all those friends of every season had hastened to visit the marquise on her arrival. The faithful D'Hacqueville was there, ready to enter into all the interests of the Grignans, and serve them to the utmost of his power; as was also Monsieur de la Garde, a relation of the Grignans, and prized on that account by Madame de Sévigné.

Monsieur de Grignan was then engaged in an undertaking which was one great reason for the anxiety of Madame de Sévigné. The town of Orange, in the department of Vaucluse, was in the seventeenth century the capital of a small country measuring only five leagues in length and four in breadth. It had for centuries been an independent state, but the kings of France persisted in asserting over it a sovereignty contested with justice by the Princes of Orange, whose right had long been established. In 1673, William of Orange having confiscated the marquisate of Berg-op-Zoom, which belonged to the Comte d'Auvergne in right of his wife, Louis XIV, to retaliate, bestowed on the Comte d'Auvergne the principality of Orange, and gave orders to the Comte

de Grignan to take violent possession of it if entrance were refused.

The town of Orange was the cradle of the illustrious house of Grignan; the first Comte d'Orange being Géraud Adhémar IV. It was therefore a grateful task for the lieutenant-general of Provence to render to his native land the town from which his family originated; but the enterprise was difficult, and should he fail, the triumph of his enemies would be great. It was said that Orange was well defended, and the minister of war, Louvois, had refused to send any artillery to the Comte de Grignan. The descendant of the Adhémars did not allow himself to be discouraged by receiving no subsidies from the minister, but called upon five hundred gentlemen of his province to accompany him as volunteers. The appeal was readily answered; Monsieur de Grignan was popular, and he now received the best public testimony of the esteem in which he was held by those he was called to govern.

On the 12th of November, 1673, the trenches were opened, and on the 18th the little garrison evacuated the citadel, leaving it to the Comte de Grignan to take possession of in the name of the King of France.

When this fortunate result was made known to Madame de Sévigné, the relief to her was great: she had been keenly anxious, fearing the ridicule which a failure might bring on her son-in-law, and she 'embraces the conqueror of Orange.' At the same time

she warmly urges her daughter to come to Paris immediately with her husband, to profit by the favourable impression the success at Orange had excited, and to plead their cause against the Bishop of Marseilles, with whom they were more than ever at variance. To Monsieur de Pomponne, in long interviews, to all whose influence could serve any purpose, did Madame de Sévigné explain and maintain the right of Monsieur de Grignan and the wrong of Monsieur de Marseilles. She promises Madame de Grignan that Madame Scarron will add her voice in case of need, but it is to be regarded as that of the friend of Madame de Montespan—to the king there is as yet no reference.

'I have just returned from St.-Germain, where I have been two days,' writes Madame de Sévigné to her daughter at the beginning of December; and then comes the mention of all the inquiries—'And how is Madame de Grignan? and when is she coming back?' The siege of Orange was naturally the subject which called forth the compliments of friends and courtiers. The king had been highly satisfied, and had praised Monsieur de Grignan. To this, so flattering to her maternal pride, was added the greater satisfaction of a long conversation with Monsieur de Pomponne, and believing she had been able to serve her daughter, Madame de Sévigné narrates what took place at St.-Germain in a happy and cheerful spirit.

The persistence of Madame de Sévigné, that Mon-

sieur de Grignan and his wife should come to Paris, was not regarded by her who was solicited as an expression of the most devoted and unselfish love. To all that Madame de Sévigné advances, to the reasons she believes imperious—and believes with others whose opinion she valued—Madame de Grignan answers with reproaches, telling her mother that she would have thought her the last person to advise her to incur excessive expenses, knowing with what difficulty they supported the state they were compelled to keep. To these words, Madame de Sévigné answers more in sorrow than in anger. She repeats them as if her eyes can hardly understand their meaning; then she says—

'No, my child, I do not wish to harm you so much; God forbid! And while you are all wisdom and philosophy, I do not desire to be accused of being a selfish, unjust, and frivolous mother, who upsets everything, who ruins all, and who impedes your acting according to your upright judgment. But I believed you would undertake this journey; you had promised me you would, and when I reflect on what you spend at Aix, in actors, in entertainments, and repasts, I can but fancy it would cost you less to come here, where you have no obligations. Monsieur de Pomponne and Monsieur de la Garde point out to me a thousand affairs in which you and Monsieur de Grignan are necessary. . . . I am disposed to receive you; my heart is carried away by hope; you are in need of change of air. I flattered

myself that Monsieur de Grignan would leave you with me this summer, so that you would not have to accomplish such a journey for two months, like a man. All your friends had the complacency to tell me I was right when wishing for you so ardently: these were my supporters. You do not consider all this as either just or true. I yield to necessity and to the force of your arguments. I shall try, after your example, to submit to them, and I shall accept this grief, no small one, as a penance God wishes me to do, and that I have well deserved. It would be difficult to find a more efficient one, and one that touches more my heart; but I must sacrifice everything, and resign myself to spend the rest of my life far from the person I best love, who suits most completely my tastes and inclinations, and who loves me better than she has ever done. I must give up all this to God, and with His grace I shall do so; I shall admire His providence which allows that, in the midst of so much grandeur and agreeableness in your establishment, there should exist difficulties which rob life of its enjoyment, and cause a separation that wounds my heart every hour of the day, and more than I desire every hour of the night. These are my sentiments; they are not exaggerated, they are simple and sincere; I shall offer them to God for my salvation. It is over; I shall say no more about it, and shall reflect on the invincible force of your reasoning, on your admirable wisdom, for which I praise you and will strive to imitate.'

What heart, what daughter's heart, could read those lines and not be melted? Who of us can become acquainted with them and not own that she who expresses so well the most profound and refined feelings of human nature, possessed a tenderness and delicacy of sentiment that cannot be surpassed? Those all-absorbing thoughts of her daughter alarmed even the conscience of Madame de Sévigné; she discovered how near she was to idolatry when she says—'That trifling circumstance of a heart which we deny to the Creator, to give it to the creature, causes me much agitation.'

The thoughts of Madame de Sévigné were for one moment diverted from her daughter by the return of the Baron de Sévigné; his stay, however, was short, and after a campaign of eight months he was ordered to Charleroy. In one of his mother's letters he sends a few lines to his sister, complaining of his hard fate; but he does so in his usual good-natured and high-spirited tone.

On the 1st of January, 1674, Madame de Sévigné addresses her good wishes to her daughter, and tells her that they comprise so many things that she would never end were she to attempt to enumerate them all. She does not express, though she insinuates, her heart's dear desire that Madame de Grignan should perform that long-promised journey to Paris. Then, as usual, comes the news of the court: the maids of honour have been suppressed, and their places have been filled with married women of first quality. The change was

attributed to Madame de Montespan, who resembled Bussy in liking noise only when made by themselves. Madame de Thianges is *dévote*, and has consequently abandoned rouge. 'Rouge is the law and the prophets; it is on rouge that rests the very foundation of Christianity.' The court devotees are cruelly but truly portrayed by Madame de Sévigné. She was too sincerely religious not to scorn the outward adornments of religion, which, as she well knew, often covered whitened sepulchres.

Madame de Grignan had repaired her harshness, and at the commencement of the year had written words of affection and respect to her mother. She is thanked by an ardent profession of affection:—'Believe, my child, that this year, and all the others of my life belong to you; it is a tissue, it is an entire existence which to its last breath is devoted to you. Your moralizing is admirable; it is true that time passes everywhere, and passes rapidly. You call after it because it robs you of some of your brilliant youth; but a great deal of it remains. For myself, I see it go by with horror, bringing to me dreadful old age, infirmities, and death. These are the reflections of a person of my time of life. Pray God, my daughter, that I may draw from them the profit Christianity teaches us.'

It seemed that time, which Madame de Sévigné measured with such terror, was at last to bring her daughter to Paris. The journey was decided upon,

but the date of departure from Grignan was not yet fixed. On this her mother writes to her :—'You are pleased that it is not your business to decide : a resolution is something strange for you ; it is your terror, I have seen you remain a long time before resolving on a colour : it is the sign of a mind too enlightened, which, as it were, embraces at one view all difficulties, and remains suspended like the coffin of Mahomet.'

The interests of the lieutenant-general of Provence had taken Madame de Sévigné to court more than was her wont. She wished first of all to see Pomponne, who was her best and most powerful friend there, and to cultivate the good-will of all who could support Monsieur de Grignan and oppose the Bishop of Marseilles. Monsieur de Grignan had been refused, through the hostile influence of the prelate, a request he had made to the Etats for a gratification of five thousand francs for the pay of a body guard. The affront of this refusal had been keenly felt by Madame de Sévigné, and she vents her anger without restraint.

'But let us speak of St.-Germain,' adds she, and she describes her reception by the queen, who declares, that having been away for three years, Madame de Grignan must return. After seeing her majesty, Madame de Sévigné visits Madame de Colbert, where she sees Mademoiselle de Blois, with her mother the Duchesse de la Vallière. The young princesse is described as a prodigy of charms and grace. She danced,

and Madame de Sévigné is reminded of her daughter at the same age. Mademoiselle de Blois called her duchesse mother 'Belle Maman,' and was herself called 'Mademoiselle.' Very soon that Belle Maman became Sœur Louise de la Miséricorde.

Conversions, as they were then called, were frequent. Men and women suddenly altered their mode of life and practised the most rigid austerity. With some it was but a cloak or a fashion; with others it was sincere, and an inspiring example. God, if often disobeyed, was at least present to the contemporaries of Madame de Sévigné. Incredulity was neither the bent nor the mode, and we think even hypocrisy was much less practised than is believed: the fear of hell was deeply implanted in minds still fresh from the superstitions of the middle ages. When civilization bursts upon a century, and throws a flood of light on what was before in obscurity, there remains for some time a remnant of a cloud like a morning fog from which the sun issues only at dawn. At one time it is neither night nor day; the heavens are clear, and when the sun shall rise high in them every nook and hollow will be lighted by his rays; but during these intervening hours many spots will remain in deep shadow. The seventeenth century occupies, we fancy, that place in the history of civilization: theology was studied by men of the greatest intelligence; a Pascal was awed by the mysteries of Christianity; equality existed in reality for all; king and servant owned a

master. Another life was looked forward to with fear and certainty, or hope and fear, but it was contemplated by sinners and righteous as inevitable a certainty as death itself. The future existence was a subject of inquiry and wonder; it called forth such repentances and such amendments as those of Madame de Marans, which Madame de Sévigné admirably describes.

Madame de Marans had been perhaps the only woman our kind marquise ever hated: she had calumniated, unjustly and wantonly, Madame de Grignan on the legitimate and honest affection she bore her brother-in-law, the Beau Grignan. Madame de Sévigné had, by every means in her power, caused Madame de Marans to rue her imprudent speech; when, therefore, Madame de Sévigné pronounces her to be an example of true piety, she can be suspected of no partiality. The following is an account she gives her daughter of a visit she paid to Madame de Marans:—

'At last, my child, I have seen Madame de Marans in her cell. . . . She was pleased to see me. We kissed each other. She is not much altered. We talked of you: she loves you better than ever, and appears so humble that it is impossible not to love her. We discoursed of her piety; she told me it was true that God had been gracious to her, and she thanks Him for it. The graces she has received are no less than an ardent faith, a tender love of God, and a

horror of the world. All this blended with such a feeling of her own weakness, that she dares not move as it were for fear the divine grace should abandon her. It is as a vessel of precious essence she guards carefully in solitude; she thinks the world would cause it to evaporate, and she even fears the occupations of piety. . . . She goes on foot to church; she reads all our good books; she works, she prays, she hates the news of the world as much as she formerly loved it; she excuses her neighbour with the same zeal she formerly accused him; she loves God as much as she loved the world. We laughed at her past manners; we turned them to ridicule. She has not the bad style of devotion; she speaks sincerely and agreeably of her feelings. I remained with her two hours, and without weariness. . . . She is much more amiable than she used to be.'

In whatever light those conversions may be regarded, it seems to us, that though the exaggerated forms they assumed may be blamed, yet they testify to a faith and resolution very uncommon in our day. There was more virility then than now. Great resolves were taken and abided by: women, young, rich, and handsome, quitted the world which held them in its chains to seek the seclusion of the cloister. It may be answered that baffled love or tired ambition hurried them to that anticipated rest. We do not deny that this may have often been the case, but love was love indeed; forgetfulness was not sought, indifference

was not courted; earnestness in all things was the watchword.

Let us look around us: who are those who forswear all things because of disappointed love? Tears are wept in secret; the heart heaves in anguish; through life even something of sadness may linger in the soul that has suffered; but where is the woman who does not with time regain, not gladness, not lightness of heart, but the possibility to live, to enjoy, and nearly always to be happy again? It is better so; we would not wish for those early resignations of life. There is no book with only one page worth reading; though the first may be the best, yet if we turn not to others we know not what hidden treasure they may disclose. Still there is something to venerate in that rashness which prompted women of twenty to say the world is but sin, and that eternal salvation must be the only care. Let us carefully avoid the false idea that convents were comfortable and quiet homes. No; the life of a Carmelite, the life that the Duchesse de la Vallière embraced at thirty, was one of privation and toil: it was sleeping on the hardest couch, waking at all hours of the night, working at the most menial occupations; it was the entire abnegation of every self-indulgence, and for years did all these delicate ladies, accustomed to every luxury and to every pleasure, follow those severe rules. Tell us not that such sentiments are to be despised or scoffed at, are they not rather deserving of veneration?

About the time that Madame de Sévigné paid her visit to Madame de Marans she went to see her uncle, Renaud de Sévigné, at Port-Royal, and the following is the description she gives of that retreat :—

'Port-Royal is a Thébaïde ; it is paradise. It is a desert where all the devotion of Christianity has taken refuge ; the atmosphere of holiness is felt far and wide. There are five or six recluses that no one knows, and who live like the penitents of St.-Jean Climaque. The nuns are angels on earth. Mademoiselle de Vertus is ending her life there with extreme resignation amidst unparalleled sufferings : she will not live another month. All who serve them, even the drivers, the shepherds, the workmen, are pious and modest. I own to you I was delighted to see that divine solitude of which I had heard so much. It is a barren valley, well calculated to turn one's thoughts to salvation.'

If Madame de Sévigné could appreciate so perfectly and describe with such truth the effects of piety, those examples did not urge her to renounce the fond idolatry of her heart to which her soul was given up so exclusively. When Madame de Grignan informs her mother of the day of her departure for Paris, Madame de Sévigné's joy is complete ; yet in awe of her daughter's philosophy, she is at pains to explain clearly, that had not all the Grignans' friends judged their journey indispensable, she would have silenced her desires and allowed her daughter to act as she pleased. This much said, she abandons herself to her happiness

and to her preparations for well receiving her dear comtesse.

In her contentment Madame de Sévigné does not lose sight of all that can be useful to her daughter, and warmly advises her to quit the ostentation of Provence, and bring with her to Paris only the necessary number of servants: 'six footmen would suffice,' she thinks, 'and six horses.' Monsieur de Grignan is begged to be satisfied with one valet only.

That every pleasure might be experienced, Charles de Sévigné arrived in Paris a few days before his sister, and the beginning of March saw them all re-united.

# CHAPTER XXVI.

1674-5.

Arrival of Madame de Grignan in Paris.—Bussy in Paris.—He sees his cousin.—Birth of Pauline de Grignan.—Marriage of Mademoiselle de Bussy.—Madame de Sévigné expresses to Bussy her grief at her approaching double separation.—His sympathy.—Difference in their nature.—Madame de Sévigné accompanies her daughter to Fontainebleau.—Sympathy of Cardinal de Retz.—He quits Paris to enter a retreat.—Madame de la Vallière takes the veil.—Reflections.—Death of Turenne.—His character.—Early admiration for Madame de Sévigné.—Revolt in Brittany.—Madame de Sévigné leaves Paris for Brittany.

AFTER an absence of three years, Madame de Grignan once more found herself in that polished society of which she had been one of the most brilliant ornaments. Accustomed as she had become of late to the ladies of her small court at Aix, she must have met with delight those charming and polite women who formed the intimate circle of Madame de Sévigné. Mother and daughter were again together for a period of fifteen months, but Madame de Sévigné during that time carried on an active correspondence with Bussy, the Comte de Guitaut, and Monsieur de Grignan, who was called back to Provence in the month of May, 1674.

Bussy had obtained permission of the king to visit Paris to settle some of his business affairs, and had remained in concealment beyond the time granted to him. The secret having reached Madame de Sévigné, she with her daughter went to visit her cousin. The interview warmed their mutual friendship, and when Bussy returned to his provincial exile, the letters exchanged between them were numerous. What had happened to Bussy in regard to Madame de Sévigné had happened to her in regard to the Guitauts; her short visit of three days at Epoisses had inspired her with renewed friendship for her neighbours which she loses no occasion to testify.

After seeing Madame de Sévigné, Bussy writes to her next morning:—'I do not love you better to-day than I did yesterday, but our conversation of last night makes me feel much more vividly the affection I entertain for you. It was lying dormant in my heart: your presence has imparted new life to it. I see by this, that long absence is as contrary to friendship as it is to love.'

A few months later, being at Chaseu, and hearing that his cousin had been ill, Bussy writes:—'You know I have said that you are one of those persons who ought never to die, as some ought never to have been born.' And again, alluding to this thought:—'It is not only as the most virtuous woman in the world that I love you; it is also as the most amiable.'

The wars of Louis XIV left but little tranquillity to Madame de Sévigné. The conquest of the Franche-Comté had called her son to face new dangers, and he had received a slight wound in the head. He had been much exposed, and his mother felt how thankful she ought to be at such a narrow escape; but her heart was too warm and her imagination too quick not to cause her to suffer acutely from such alarms. Madame de Grignan's health also had been delicate. The preceding year at Aix she narrowly escaped death in her confinement, and now the birth of another child was looked forward to with great anxiety. On the 9th of September, 1674, she was, however, safely delivered of that daughter who became the Marquise de Simiane. The Cardinal de Retz, who had been for some months enjoying the society of his two dear nieces, was the sponsor, and after him the young daughter of Madame de Grignan received the name of Pauline.

In April 1675, Bussy announced to Madame de Sévigné the approaching marriage of his eldest daughter Françoise. She was a person of considerable attractions, and had been instructed by her father, who had carefully developed her natural abilities. She was the ornament of the small circle that met at Chaseu and Bussy; but her father's disgrace had not contributed to bring suitors for her hand. There had been some thought of her being united to the Comte de Limoges, but that was abandoned, and at the age

of twenty-eight she became the wife of the Marquis de Coligny, who was for her in name and in fortune a most desirable alliance. When Madame de Sévigné was called upon to congratulate the father and daughter, she was on the point of seeing both her son and daughter leave her, and she writes to Bussy:—'In reality my head is turned: my son in three days joins the army, and in a few more my daughter starts for Provence. It is not to be imagined that, contemplating such separations, I can retain what sense I possess. Have then pity on me.' In the same letter Madame de Grignan and Corbinelli send their congratulations to Bussy and the future bride.

Bussy in reply to his cousin's lamentations says—'I do not doubt that you suffer keenly, being on the point of separating yourself from those you love best, and ought to love best. One could live happily if it were possible to act as the opera tells us—

"N'aimons jamais, ou n'aimons guère,
Il est dangereux d'aimer tant." *

—For myself, I prefer the complaint to the remedy, and I find it better to suffer when leaving those I love than to love them coldly. Perpetual indolence does not suit me; I prefer violent changes.'

It would have been difficult for Bussy to understand and enter completely into the feelings of Madame de Sévigné: such an affection as that she bore her

* Let us never love, or love but little; it is dangerous to love too much.

daughter was foreign to his selfish nature, and his confession, if sincere, came from the depths of a very shallow heart. Madame de Sévigné every time she quitted her daughter passed through an ordeal of suffering which only those who love some dear absent one, as she loved Madame de Grignan, can appreciate, and certainly Bussy was not one of that number.

On the 24th of May, at Fontainebleau, Madame de Sévigné, who had accompanied her daughter thus far, bade her good-bye, and with her kind uncle repaired to Livry to give way to her grief in solitude. With deep sorrow she resumes that correspondence, the only consolation of a bereaved heart:—'What a day, my daughter, is that which opens on our separation! How has it appeared to you? For myself, I have felt it with all the bitterness and grief I had imagined and apprehended so long. What a moment that when we quitted each other! what an adieu! and what a sorrow to go each a different way when we are so well together! I will not dwell more upon it, or descant upon, as you say, all the thoughts which oppress my heart. I will try and represent to myself your courage, and all you said to me on this subject which makes me admire you. Still I fancied you were moved when kissing me. As for myself, I came back to Paris, as you can imagine. Monsieur de Coulanges suited himself to my disposition. I went straight to the Cardinal de Retz.'

None better than that 'dear eminence' entered into

the feelings of Madame de Sévigné for her daughter, and his indulgence and sympathy were his greatest claims to her affection. At all times she had valued Retz, and when she sees him preparing to renounce the world, and end in retirement and piety a life that had been so full of busy intrigues, admiration is added to affection. She puts in its most brilliant light an action which was exciting more curiosity than credence: few believed that Retz would carry out his intention, and Madame de Sévigné revolted at what she considered an injustice to a man she venerated and esteemed. During those first days of her daughter's absence, though all her friends vied with each other to offer her every consolation in their power, it is to Retz she returns most willingly. With him her tears flowed freely, and she says to Madame de Grignan—'Be not anxious for those who have the gift of tears. I pray God that I may never feel those sorrows when the eyes do not relieve the heart.'

Madame de Sévigné had quitted Livry to enjoy the last moments she could spend with the Cardinal de Retz: it was another separation to take place, and if it could not be compared to that at Fontainebleau, still it weighed on her heart, causing her, when it came to pass, to write—'I assure you, my child, that after the adieu I said to you at Fontainebleau, that which I bade yesterday to the Cardinal de Retz is the most painful to my heart. . . . I tell you again, my child, you cannot have for him sufficient esteem or affection.'

At the time Retz was abandoning those scenes in which he had acted so pre-eminent a part, a woman who had also enjoyed, not the exhilarating triumphs of ambition, but those of love, was renouncing her name, her youth, her lover, and her children. A year before, Mademoiselle de la Vallière had entered the convent of the Grandes Carmélites, and for a whole week, day after day, had taken leave of all those she had cherished on earth. For a year she had pursued her novitiate, and on the 4th of June, 1675, she made her profession.

'The Duchesse de la Vallière made yesterday her profession. Madame de Villars had promised to take me, but by some unlucky confusion we imagined we could not have a place. There was nothing necessary but to present oneself, though the queen had said she did not wish the permission to be extended. However, it was not to be. Madame de Villars has been sorry about it. And so this lovely and courageous person accomplished this action, like all the actions of her life, in a manner both noble and charming. Her beauty surprised everyone ; but what will surprise you is that the sermon of Monsieur de Condom [Bossuet] was not as sublime as had been anticipated.'

It was the eloquent voice of Bossuet which had been called upon to illustrate that great example of repentance, and the genius that had inspired those moving orations spoken over the coffins of the greatest and loveliest, failed to move the hearts of those pre-

sent on this occasion. But what was the task? The queen, offended and forgiving, was present; she who had sinned kneeling in deep humility close to her fortunate and triumphant rival; and unseen, but exercising a power over every heart, the monarch, the husband, the lover. So Bossuet's eloquence was silenced, and the noble self-sacrifice proclaimed itself by its own force. Of these women, doomed all three to suffering, the most proud and happy in that hour was to know the greatest bitterness; the last years of the splendid Montespan, the real queen of Louis XIV, were in their abandoned sadness a sufficient atonement for her sin. Sœur Louise de la Misèricorde died in peace at a ripe age; Madame de Montespan, in full maturity, and forsaken by all. Better to lay down willingly that fair head than lay it low in the bitterness of humiliation.

Madame de Grignan had no sooner left Paris than she expresses to her mother the impatience she feels for her 'gazette,' and such encouragement was more than sufficient to excite Madame de Sévigné's zeal, and make her seek all the news about which her daughter was curious. The court was the ever-changing scene to which all eyes were turned, and every step of Madame de Montespan is recorded. The real days of her triumph were passed, for though seemingly all-powerful, there was one shadow growing every day bigger on her path. Madame Scarron was already the Marquise de Maintenon.

Madame de Sévigné, her daughter gone, found all her pleasure in writing to her and receiving her letters; she was, however, looking forward to increasing the distance between them. Her presence was imperiously demanded at the Rochers, and in spite of the troubled state of the province, she contemplated going there in the company of her Bien Bon. But before starting, her care was to settle all the affairs of her daughter. Her mind was incessantly turned towards Grignan, and yet in the face of that absorbing devotion, her influence over her daughter failed even in trifles. The Cardinal de Retz, in giving up his establishment, and selling his plate to pay off his debts, had reserved a small silver casket to offer as a present to Madame de Grignan. Instead of being gracefully accepted, it was, in spite of Madame de Sévigné's endeavours to show her daughter the rudeness of her conduct, haughtily declined.

'Do you know, my daughter, that this excess of pride is a defect that is not estimable?' But it was of no avail, and Madame de Grignan abided by her decision, offending both her mother and a relation who had always given her proofs of friendship and interest.

The increasing revolt in Brittany forced Madame de Sévigné to delay her journey, and she remained in uncertainty as to when she could start. 'But,' says she, 'you know my devotion to Providence. We must always come back to it, and live from day to day. My words are wise, as you see, but very often my conduct

is not. There is one point, which you can easily guess, on which I cannot practise that resignation I preach to others.'

On the 31st of July, 1675, Madame de Sévigné announced to her son-in-law a catastrophe that was throwing the whole of France into mourning. Turenne, the great co-hero of Condé, had been killed, and not in battle.

'It is to you, my dear comte, I address myself, to inform you of one of the greatest losses France could suffer: it is the death of Monsieur de Turenne. If I am the first to announce it to you, I am persuaded you will be as grieved and moved as we are. The news arrived at Versailles on Monday, and the king was afflicted, as he might be, at the death of the greatest captain and the most honourable man in the world. All the court was in tears, and Monsieur de Condom nearly fainting. The court was on the point of starting for Fontainebleau in pursuit of pleasure. All was abandoned. Never was a man more sincerely regretted. This part of the town where he lived, the whole of Paris, and all the people were thrown into confusion and grief. I send you an exact account of the last days of his life. It was after three months of miraculous achievements that had excited the admiration of every soldier, that the last day of his glory and his life arrived. He had the pleasure of seeing the army of the enemy retreating before him, and on the 27th, which was Saturday, he went to the top of

a small eminence to observe their movements. His intention was to attack the rear guard, and so thinking he had written to the king in the morning, that he had sent word to Brissac to have prayers of "forty hours" said. He announced the death of the young D'Hocquincourt, and added that he would despatch a messenger to inform the king of the result of the undertaking. He sealed his letter and sent it at two o'clock. He then went out on that small eminence, accompanied by eight or ten persons. From afar a cannon was fired at random, which cut his body in two. You can judge the cries and tears of the army. The courier started instantly, and arrived on Monday as I told you; so that the king at one hour's interval received a letter from Monsieur de Turenne and the news of his death.'

Turenne, it is to be remembered, was one of Madame de Sévigné's most ardent admirers in the days of her youth. In his fate she then took a double interest, and the woman's inward thoughts turned with regret to that past which Turenne represented. To this was joined that feeling which all who wished for the success of French arms must have experienced.

The death of the great captain occurred at a moment when his military genius was in its splendour, and while he was gloriously serving his country. His end was a triumph to the enemy and a defeat to France. Through every rank this conviction ran, and consternation can best express what was experienced by great

and small. The very flower of French nobility was at the wars, and the loss of one whose presence it was believed assured victory, was regarded by many as a fatal omen. In every letter of Madame de Sévigné at that period, traces of violent emotion are found; every new detail concerning Monsieur de Turenne is transmitted to Provence as a matter of deep interest.

'I am always thinking, my daughter, of the surprise and astonishment you will feel at the news of Monsieur de Turenne's death. . . . They say the soldiers' cries were heard two miles off; no consideration could restrain them: they begged to be led to battle; they vowed to avenge the life of their father, their general, their protector.'

Turenne, rough and abrupt in his ways, was kind to his soldiers, and anxious for the welfare of all. He inspired them with both respect and confidence, and their clamorous desolation was well founded. A few days after having written to her daughter, Madame de Sévigné enters on this subject with her cousin Bussy, and alluding to his absence from the army says—

'You did not see the death of Monsieur de Turenne, nor that cannon-ball fired at random, and which selects him out of ten or twelve. As for me, who recognize Providence in all things, I see that cannon loaded from all eternity. I see that everything leads Monsieur de Turenne to it, and I find nothing to deplore for his sake, providing his conscience was prepared. What more could he need? He dies in the midst of

his glory; his reputation could not be greater; he was enjoying at that moment the satisfaction of seeing his enemies retreat. Sometimes, when life prolongs itself too much, the star of heroes becomes less brilliant. It is better to cut into the quick, particularly for heroes, whose actions are so much noticed.' Then she names two men who have survived their reputation, and adds—'Monsieur de Turenne did not feel death; do you count that as nothing?'

The fear of death was too vivid in Madame de Sévigné not to make her dwell on those she believed to have been mercifully dealt with. The blood of the Rabutins, even when it flowed in the veins of a dashing soldier like Bussy, revolted at the thought of destruction, and the reflections of the two cousins on this subject bear a close resemblance. For both life was a boon, and in spite of every grief, it was cherished.

Bussy, in answering Madame de Sévigné's letter, writes:—'I agree with you that life is too short: a hundred years assured would be a reasonable time to live. You ask me if there is no means of attaining that age. After having thought much about it, this is what I have discovered, not as a certainty, but as likely to prolong life. To sleep but little, to eat in moderation, and not fear death; to be dull sometimes, and sometimes divert ourselves; for if we diverted ourselves always, life would appear too short; and if we were always dull, we should die of weariness.'

The few years given to us, and which we often spend

in a manner opposed to our inclination, was a continual subject of regret for Madame de Sévigné. Every day that passed seemed to rob her of some moment of joy she might have spent in her dear daughter's society, and when she finds herself compelled to increase the distance already between them, she says—'If I believed my heart, I would put very far from me all my little affairs and start for Grignan. I would leave the Bien Bon, since he is the "bien méchant," and for the few days we have to live I would live after my own fashion. What folly to restrain oneself for a dull round of duty and business! Who thanks us for it?'

No doubt Madame de Sévigné felt what she expressed, but at the same time she has also said—'You know how I fear remorse.' If her imagination ran wild, her conduct was guided by the most strict sense of duty, and on this occasion she was even risking some serious peril in starting for Brittany.

The cause of the agitation which was alarming the whole of the nobility of Brittany, was a new tax on tobacco, which the ignorant peasantry violently refused to pay. The impost on tinned goods had been impatiently submitted to, but to be deprived of tobacco exasperated the people to resistance; the officers appointed to receive the taxes were assaulted, and soon an armed rebellion was afoot. Châteaux were pillaged and burned; seigneurs were hanged, their sword by their side, to the village spire; the governor was received with a shower of stones in the streets of

Rennes; the Duchesse de Chaulnes insulted and menaced, and terror spread over a whole country. The scene of action was more in Basse Bretagne, and Madame de Sévigné believed she would be in security at the Rochers; but soon she hears, 'Those demons have been as far as Fougères.' The hour of repression was come also, and before Madame de Sévigné arrived at the Rochers, the king's troops had preceded her to quiet the province, that is, 'to ruin it.' Monsieur de Forbin and Monsieur de Vins, the latter the brother-in-law of Pomponne, had been ordered to pacify Brittany, and protect the property of Madame de Sévigné.

Such was the state of affairs at the time the marquise left Paris.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

1675–6.

Madame de Sévigné's journey to Brittany.—She is welcomed at Nantes by Monsieur de Lavardin and Monsieur d'Harouys.—Comments on the cruelty exercised in Brittany.—Solitude of the Rochers.—Madame de Sévigné's neighbour, the Princesse de Tarente.—Correspondence with Madame de Grignan.—Reflections on Louis XIV.—Arrival of Charles de Sévigné.—Mutual affection of the mother and son.—Madame de Sévigné has an attack of rheumatism.—Affectionate solicitude of her son.—Indifference of Madame de Grignan.—She neglects writing to the Princesse de Tarente.—Madame de Sévigné leaves the Rochers for Paris.

THE Abbé de Coulanges was the only companion of Madame de Sévigné on this journey; neither the amiable baron nor the officious La Mousse keeping her company. It was with 'the deepest sadness' the marquise left Paris, knowing well that she could no longer receive her daughter's letters with their accustomed regularity, and experiencing the most serious anxiety as to the welfare of her son, then 'with the army of Monsieur de Luxembourg, who is furiously impatient to act.'

The Abbé de Coulanges, although everything that was kind, was not a cheerful companion for his niece.

With him she fears the tedium of the journey, to vary which she decided to perform it by water.

Arrived at Orleans, she writes to her daughter:—'And now, my love, I am on the point of embarking on our Loire. Do you remember the charming voyage we made together upon it? I shall often think of it.'

That remembrance, dear to Madame de Sévigné as was all that in any way referred to her daughter, was necessary to cheer the melancholy she was experiencing. The burden of moral solitude was weighing upon her when she writes—'I consider myself fortunate in being a substance that thinks and reads; otherwise, our good abbé would not amuse me much. . . . The landscape and the weather are admirable. These are crystal days, when one feels neither heat nor cold. Our carriage could very well have taken us by road, but it is to divert ourselves that we go by water.'

The pleasure, however, had its drawbacks; the boat going aground so often that Madame de Sévigné is forced to acknowledge that she regrets not being in her carriage, which at least would not stop every moment. Owing to the difficulties of navigation she and the abbé are forced to land at midnight, and sleep on straw in a miserable hovel; and Madame de Sévigné says—'I should have laughed if I had not been ashamed of having exposed the abbé to the fatigues of such a journey.'

Arrived at Nantes, Madame de Sévigné was received on landing by the Marquis de Lavardin, the son of her intimate friend the Marquise de Lavardin, and who was Lieutenant-general of Brittany: he and Monsieur d'Harouys vied with each other who should give her the most hospitable welcome. It is with pleasure the marquise finds herself once more in the midst of friends, and she says of Monsieur de Lavardin —'He really has many very good and noble qualities.' It was true he was a most honourable man, and to Madame de Sévigné, the friend of his mother, the lady of the Rochers, he showed himself at his best. Madame de Grignan was not partial to him, and the eulogies of Madame de Sévigné were a kind of justification of her feelings for Monsieur de Lavardin. After receiving such attention from him, she did not find a grateful echo in Madame de Grignan, and she repeats again—'I dare not tell you anything more in his praise, but he has solid qualities, and his disinterestedness gives him great power for commanding.' And again :—'He is the least servile courtier I ever met.'

It is worth while to remark Madame de Sévigné's appreciation of what she deems worthy of praise or condemnation. She lauds Lavardin for those virtues least practised in his days; and when she speaks in reprobation of the cruel repressions in Brittany, it must be read as the just and equitable indignation of a woman: it is in truth a protest, one which would have called forth the severe judgment of her contemporaries.

The sufferings of the people were not viewed as they would be to-day, and moreover, Madame de Sévigné was the intimate friend of those whom she cannot refrain from blaming.

We shall presently come to some passages in the correspondence which have been signalized as unfeeling and unseemly. They strike us in another light. Words, we repeat it, must be carefully weighed, as so often they have but a relative value. Human life and suffering were both less and more considered in the seventeenth century than in the present. Torture existed, and all, even the most sensitive, were familiar in thought with its fearful horrors. It was, we imagine, to their minds something palpable, and yet no more to be realized by them than is to us the carnage of a battle-field where a hundred thousand men are face to face.

We speak lightly of war, and do so without being hard hearted; we talk of the number of dead and wounded, we feel a thrill of horror, and the heart sickens, but we pass on. Could we but see one of those mutilated men, what an agony of pity would fill our soul! Truly, war as it is conducted now would have revolted the captains of the seventeenth century. In many points they were barbarous, but they regarded winter as an obstacle to further progess, and the sacrifice of hecatombs like those of our day were unknown. It is difficult to say where begins the line that separates insensibility from pity, one so often wears the garb of

the other: it is the voice that speaks, the soul that prompts which proclaim the true feelings.

Madame de Sévigné was as truly human as any mother and woman can be; she recoiled with horror from the atrocities committed, and sometimes when she mentions them and then passes on, it is that she thinks them their own commentary. If a painter represents a scene of woe, he does not write beneath it: 'Stop and mourn;' he knows he has been telling his tale by a living representation intended to move the hearts of every spectator. What more bitter irony than the apparently trifling manner in which Madame de Sévigné describes the ruin of a whole province! Between those lines we read an indignant protest.

At the end of September Madame de Sévigné reached the Rochers, and found her woods 'of an extraordinary melancholy and beauty.' The trees she had planted were now giving shade, and she owns to her daughter that there is a slight appearance of maternal affection in what she feels. 'Consider,' says she, 'that I saw them all no higher than that, as Monsieur de Montbazon used to say of his children.'

Her imagination in those solitary woods flew instantly to her daughter. 'I must look steadfastly at the will of God, to contemplate without despair all I see.' There is a visible trace of sadness in the letters Madame de Sévigné writes at this period: her mind turned sorrowfully to all that was most painful to her heart. In speaking of the intense grief of Madame de

Vaubrun, who had lost her husband, she says, as if answering some inward thought:—'There are some griefs which ought to remain inconsolable.' Madame de Sévigné is constantly reflecting on life and its troubles, and it is with admirable grandeur she writes —'Nothing is worth having but a righteous heart; one sees through all things as through a surface of crystal; there is nothing to hide.'

The quiet of the Rochers was as an oasis in a barren desert. 'Nearly the whole of Brittany was overrun by a brutal soldiery, and for exemption from their presence Madame de Sévigné was indebted not only to Monsieur de Pomponne, but to her neighbour, the Princesse de Tarenté, who lived at Château Madame, close to the Rochers. The 'bonne Tarente,' who from this time is so frequently mentioned in the letters written in Brittany, was the daughter of the Landgrave of Hesse, and the widow of the Duc de la Trémouille, Prince de Tarente, and first baron of Brittany. This great lady was the aunt of the second MADAME, and therefore her position in Brittany entitled her to every respect.

The princesse was about the same age as Madame de Sévigné, whose amiability and wit she appreciated. They had moreover in common one sentiment and one regret which inclined their hearts towards one another: the daughter of the princesse was tenderly cherished by her mother, from whom also she was separated. 'She loves her daughter,' writes Madame de Sévigné; 'she

thinks of her, and told me all she suffered as to the only person who could understand her.'

Madame de Sévigné found in the Bonne Tarente a kind listener, and the princesse acted towards her in the same manner. The marquise is informed by her of the different intrigues which were agitating the court of Denmark, where the young Princesse de la Trémouille resided with the queen, her first cousin. Two suitors were striving for the hand of the Princesse de Tarente's daughter; one the favourite of the king, the other protected by the queen.

The news regarding Denmark is carefully transmitted to Madame de Grignan. 'When I shall not speak to you of that court, I shall entertain you about Pilois [the gardener].'

The maternal sympathy which served to create a sincere friendship between two women so different as Madame de Sévigné and the Princesse de Tarente, could hardly be understood by Madame de Grignan. It is evident from her mother's letters that the heart of Madame de Grignan remained cold to her own children, and that if the little marquis was regarded as the heir, the other children were regarded with indifference by their mother. Madame de Sévigné more than once touchingly recommends her little granddaughter to Madame de Grignan, and she says—'You do me great pleasure in taking good care of my little one. I am convinced of the satisfaction you have in doing something for the love of me. I do not understand why

you say that absence disturbs all our affections. I find it does us no other harm than to cause us to suffer. I ignore completely the delights of inconstancy, and I think I may answer and vouch for all those hearts where you reign supreme that not one of them has changed. Is it generous for me to answer for other hearts than my own? Are you at least assured of that one? I do not find you any longer so occupied with your son. I fancy it is your fault, for he was much too intelligent not to be still very pretty. You do not yet understand maternal love: it is fortunate, my daughter, for it is violent; but except when there exists particular reasons like those I had, and which are not often met with, it is as well to dispense with that excess.'

Madame de Sévigné in those last lines discloses some of the hidden wounds of her heart. Her maternal tenderness was in truth carried to excess, and there is no doubt she felt this without, moreover, being able to alter her feelings.

The life of Madame de Sévigné at the Rochers did not resemble that she had led when last she was there. Instead of the gaiety and display of the Etats at Vitré, there existed nothing but desolation. She could not remain there long without being absorbed, like everyone else, by what was passing around her, and she says—'All our province is so entirely occupied with punishments inflicted upon it, that no one pays visits.' And a few days later—'I share the desolation of the

whole province. . . . Monsieur de Montmoron has taken refuge at the house of one of his friends, three leagues from here, in order not to hear the cries and desolation of the people of Rennes when they see their parliament leave the town. You perceive that I am quite "Bretonne;" but you well understand that it is owing to the atmosphere we breathe, and also to something more, for everyone is afflicted.'

When we know what were the punishments inflicted on the rebels we cannot wonder at this sadness. This is what Madame de Sévigné narrates to her daughter:—'Do you wish to know the news of Rennes? There are still five thousand men, for others have come from Nantes. They have decreed a tax of one hundred thousand écus to be paid by the bourgeois, and if it is not done in twenty-four hours it will be doubled, and the soldiers will force the payment. They have banished all the inhabitants of one large street, and have forbidden the other people in the town to receive them under pain of death; so that there is to be seen all those unfortunates, old men, sick women, and children, roaming in tears outside the town, not knowing where to go, where to find food, and where to sleep. . . . They have arrested sixty bourgeois, and to-morrow they begin to hang. This province is a fine example to others, and particularly to teach respect for the governors, not insult them, nor throw stones in their gardens.'

In many cases those fearful punishments were in-

flicted for no other crime than the paltry offence with which Madame de Sévigné closes her sentence. Louis XIV had now reached the summit of human indifference. A short time before leaving Paris, Madame de Sévigné had in a letter to her daughter remarked upon the increasing arrogance of the monarch :—'Royalty is established beyond what you can conceive. There is no thought of rising, or of looking at any one. The other day a poor mother who has lost the most charming son, was in tears imploring his majesty to give her back the money paid for his commission. His majesty passed on. Afterwards, and on her knees, that poor Madame de Froulai dragged herself to his feet, begging him to take pity on her. The king never stopped.'

What could be to such a man the sufferings of a distant province? He could decree with impunity the death of hundreds of unfortunate human beings, then turn his severe eyes on the beaming Montespan, or receive from his neglected queen every proof of blind adoration, and from his nobility the servile homage of inferiors. This worship of royalty had grown since Madame de Sévigné's younger days: she could recall those years of the Fronde, when Louis XIV submitted to conditions, and the sleeping Rabutins at Bourbilly could have told another tale of the first Bourbon monarch. It was true respect and noble homage, equally honourable to him that accepts and to him that offers it, that Henri IV received

from his companions-in-arms, and though he did not demand godlike worship, he remains as the very incarnation of royalty. His white colours flying high, with no spot upon them but the red mark of his own blood, he wooed France, he loved her, he espoused her, and their quarrels were like those of lovers—bonds of affection which endear the more. Louis XIV strived for nothing but his own glory: had he borne for his country but half the affection his grandfather had for it, gifted as he was with so many qualities eminently suited to a monarch, he would have earned that name of 'great' which he has only usurped.

All these considerations, slightly though pointedly hinted at by Madame de Sévigné, caused her to rejoice at the popularity Monsieur de Grignan enjoyed in Provence. Excess of zeal was the fault of many governors whom she saw detested, and she says—'If you would be witness of the hatred, horror, and detestation that exists in some places for the governor, you would better feel the consolation of being everywhere liked. What reproaches! what affronts! what insults! what menaces, and besides all this, stones flying about them! I do not think Monsieur de Grignan would accept this place on such conditions.'

With the means Monsieur de Chaulnes used to calm the rebellion, it is not surprising to hear that when he arrived at Rennes, accompanied by Monsieur de Forbin and Monsieur de Vins, 'he was received like the king; but as it is fear only that makes them

change their language, Monsieur de Chaulnes does not forget the insults he has received,' adds the marquise.

Madame de Sévigné strove to forget in the peaceful beauty of the country the miseries with which she was surrounded. Her life was spent in an amiable austerity, in which she found herself at ease, as she did in all circumstances of life. 'You would like,' writes she to Madame de Grignan, 'my simple fare and the exercise I take. I sleep seven hours like a Carmélite. That hard life, which resembles the country, suits me, and the air I breathe is so lenient, that a complexion which has been praised so many years remains unaltered.'

With her workmen, Madame de Sévigné found much to amuse her: she had a taste for building and planting, and at the Rochers she indulged it freely. She owns, and it is not surprising when we think what her solitary abode must have been in November, with no other society than the Bien Bon, that 'the surface of my humour depends on the weather, so that if you wish to know how I am, you must consult the stars. But your Provence will always answer you wonders. Fine weather is nothing to you who are too much accustomed to it. For us, we see the sun so rarely that it causes us particular joy. A fine moral could be drawn from this, but I have said enough about rain and sunshine.'

However, the days, even the dark and dull, were

well occupied by Madame de Sévigné; and the long evenings, the thought of which tormented Madame de Grignan, were so employed as to render them tolerable. 'Those evenings, which you are anxious about, my daughter—alas! I pass them without dullness. I nearly always have to write, or else I read, and insensibly midnight comes. The abbé leaves me at ten, and the two hours I remain alone do not kill me any more than the others. During the day I have business with the Bien Bon, or else I occupy myself with my great and convenient work [tapestry]. In truth, my child, life glides on so rapidly that I know not how we can so often feel despair about the affairs of this world. One has time here to make reflections.'

It was in such moments that Madame de Sévigné pondered most on that grief, surpassing all others—the separation from her daughter. Neither time nor any other consideration could rob it of its bitterness, and if we reflect on Madame de Sévigné's peculiar situation, we see how natural it was that it should be so. Her son was charming and amiable, but she enjoyed his presence only at long intervals, and therefore she remained as it were alone. Nothing could divert her, because nothing could absorb her; neither love nor ambition had ruffled the pure stream of maternal tenderness, and insensibly every other feeling had been blended in that one. 'Life passes,' she writes, 'without my enjoying a presence so dear. I cannot accustom myself to this hardship; all my thoughts

and all my meditations are darkened by it. I should need a courage that I do not possess to reconcile myself to this extraordinary destiny. I regret every one of my days that goes by and draws me on without giving me time to be with you. I regret my life, and yet I shall quit it with less sorrow, since everything in it is so badly arranged to make it agreeable. In these thoughts, my dearest, I weep sometimes without telling you, and I should deserve your sermons, in spite of my efforts, more often than I should wish, for it is never voluntarily I throw myself in those sad meditations: I find them naturally in my heart, and I have not the power to master them.'

Even had Madame de Grignan requited her mother's affection as it deserved, even had she been as naturally affectionate as her brother, it would have been impossible for her to have given to Madame de Sévigné an equivalent return of tenderness. Her husband, her exalted position, what affection she had for her children, her passion for grandeur and dominion, each and all demanded too great a share of her heart and thoughts to enable her ever to compare what she felt with what her mother experienced. There are in the sky in a serene summer night thousands of brilliant stars, yet their light is pale when compared with a winter's sun: one concentrates, the others disperse. Madame de Sévigné treasured all the feelings of her heart for one object, and when, alluding to the many affections that occupied the Princesse de Tarente, or rather that

had occupied her, she very justly puts it—'I do not think she has had time to love her daughter as I do mine, or dare compare herself with me. There needs be more than one heart to love so many objects. As for me, I perceive every day that the large fish eat the small ones. If you are my preserver, as you tell me, I am too much obliged to you, and cannot prize enough the affection I have for you: I do not know from what you have preserved me, but if it were from fire and water I could not love you more than I do.'

It was in listening to the confidences of the Princesse de Tarente, who put 'all her glory' on those adventures, of which her very different neighbour judged at her time of life she ought to lose even the recollection, that the testimony of her irreproachable life came back to Madame de Sévigné as a silent but consoling remembrance. Comparing her tranquil and yet troubled existence with that of her Bonne Tarente, she thanked as it were her children who had guarded her so well, and spared her those reminiscences she deplored in others. She could now with calm serenity measure her perils. They had been very great. The woman, endowed as Madame de Sévigné was, formed to please and fashioned for love, who could at the age of twenty-five renounce every other endearment but those of her children; deserved the name of virtuous. There was a sort of gratitude in the feelings Madame de Sévigné had for her children, and it intensified them.

The weeks were passed quietly in the Château des

Rochers, sometimes in the society of the Bonne Tarente, sometimes in that of Mademoiselle du Plessis, for whom Madame de Sévigné professes a sort of sympathy. When she is forced to own—'Excepting that'—alas, *that* was a great deal—'she is the best creature in the world,' perhaps Madame de Sévigné's judgment, as in her more severe remarks on the same person, was carried to an extreme. Mademoiselle du Plessis appears to have been gifted with few good qualities, if any, and a great many that were mean and ridiculous. Her redeeming point was that she loved Madame de Sévigné, and was so convinced of the superiority of the marquise, that her pride was to be thought her favourite, and her aim to imitate her. Such a companion could not be acceptable to Madame de Sévigné, but it is ridiculous to believe that she really treated the poor country girl as she describes: in the first place, her heart was incapable of it; in the second, her good breeding forbade it. Mademoiselle du Plessis, her stupidities, her exaggerations were a standing joke between mother and daughter, and indulged in consequence. That such a person as Mademoiselle du Plessis was tolerated by Madame de Sévigné says much in favour of her indulgence. Neither recreation nor profit, nor benefit of any kind, could she derive from her acquaintance, and Mademoiselle du Plessis reaped all that and more.

The letters of Madame de Grignan were as usual the solace of Madame de Sévigné, and the delay of one

courier inspires her with such reflections as these on patience :—

'If we would only have patience we should spare ourselves a deal of sorrow: Time takes away as much as he brings. You know we find him a real dabbler, placing and removing, arranging and disarranging, marking and blotting, shortening and lengthening, rendering all things good and bad, and nearly always disfiguring them. There is but our friendship that Time respects, and must always respect.' Then again, as we have often remarked, Madame de Sévigné affirms beforehand what her daughter's sentiments ought to be, and suggests to her what assurances of affection would satisfy her. For her own part she is never weary of telling Madame de Grignan that she knows no rival in her heart, and exclaims :—'I give you with pleasure the flower of all my baskets; that is, the flower of my wit, of my head, of my eyes, of my pen, of my inkstand; the rest goes as it can. I divert myself as much conversing with you as I labour with others.'

This is not the only time Madame de Sévigné speaks of her distaste for writing: the numerous letters she had to answer she considered fatiguing. This does not at all coincide with the assurances of those who would represent her as labouring constantly in view of posterity, and being aware of the monument she was daily erecting to her memory. No one could have been more unconscious of it, while she

herself very truly says, her pen always has 'the reins upon the neck.'

The Baron de Sévigné had been for some time expected by his mother, and for more than three weeks she remained without news of him. He was no longer with the army, and he was not at the Rochers; however, Madame de Sévigné was not uneasy, supposing him, with truth, to be occupied 'singing matins' with a young abbess he often visited. At last the truant son made his appearance, and it is thus announced to Madame de Grignan:—

'As I was returning from a walk the day before yesterday, at the end of the Mail I met the frater, who the moment he saw me went on both knees at my feet, feeling himself so guilty in having remained three weeks under the earth singing matins, that he could not approach me in any other way. I had firmly resolved to scold him, but I did not know where to find my anger. I was delighted to see him; you are aware how diverting he is. He kissed me a thousand times, and gave me the worst reasons in the world, which I accepted as good. We converse a great deal; we read, we walk, and we shall here end the year, that is, what remains of it.'

The presence of Charles de Sévigné at the Rochers altered for his mother the whole aspect of the place. She found herself regarded with the most tender affection, and occupied with an intelligent and gay companion. Sévigné cherished his mother, enjoyed all

the charms of her society, and all the security and ease she allowed him in his intercourse with her. It was into her indulgent ear he poured the tale of his follies which she fondly reproved, while the statement of his wrongs called forth her tender sympathy.

While Françoise de Sévigné was a queen in Provence, her brother was impatiently filling the post of 'guidon' (standard-bearer) in the Gendarmes Dauphins, which at the time of Madame de Grignan's marriage had been purchased for him. It was looked upon as a stepping-stone to something better, but the very nature of the post rendered advancement extremely slow and dependent on circumstances which no valour could control. Sévigné detested a grade so inferior to his rank and fortune, and even to his age, calling himself 'Guidon with a gray beard,' while the long conversations with his mother were taken up discussing the best means to rid himself of an occupation so distasteful, and to do so without too great a pecuniary loss.

The revolt in Brittany had deranged Madame de Sévigné's affairs, as those of every landowner in the province, and when her daughter begs her to tell her in earnest whether she is really ruined, as she says, she answers—'Yes, and no. If we would remain here we could live for nothing, because nothing can be sold; but as for money, it is true, there is none left in this province.'

The disappointments of Charles de Sévigné did not,

however, damp his good spirits or cloud the affection he had for his sister. He hastens to write to her, and does so with expressions of the most vivid friendship, and at the same time with a sort of deference for the better wisdom of his sister, who had strongly opposed the purchase of his 'Guidonnage.' From what he says it is to be inferred that Madame de Grignan was solicitous for her brother's interests, and he thanks her in warm terms. Nothing was lost for his grateful heart, and he writes to his sister—'May God preserve to us, my dear sister, so good a mother and so good an uncle.' By him also the unfortunate Mademoiselle du Plessis is unmercifully ridiculed, and perhaps she was rather more exposed to the jokes of the son than to those of the mother.

The similarity of character between Madame de Sévigné and her son is strongly manifested in a few lines she writes of him to her daughter, and which, we think, is an exact description of her own disposition :—'My son diverts us ; he adopts the spirit of the place he is in, and brings into this solitude nothing of the army and the court but what renders conversation agreeable.' It was in acting thus that Madame de Sévigné earned for herself the affection and good-will of her neighbours.

Her presence at the Rochers was regarded as a boon, and she finds herself blaming those selfish friendships which would wish to retain her there for ever :—'I cannot accustom myself to the barbarity

with which they all desire that I should spend the rest of my life at the Rochers; they do so continually, never imagining that it is possible to find a society more delightful than that of Mademoiselle du Plessis. It makes me impatient to see that in a whole province there is not a person capable of imagining it likely one may have some friends in Paris.'

The Princesse de Tarente, like Madame de Sévigné, would have willingly abandoned her Château Madame for the court, where her nephew and niece seemed to call her; but if MONSIEUR wrote to her as his 'dear aunt,' and MADAME assured her of her affection, they did nothing to facilitate her return to Paris, and contented themselves with sending her an exemption from the troops which were covering the whole country. It was necessity that retained the German princesse and the amiable marquise in their country retreats, and necessity that brought in close contact two natures so different: the bond, however, was their mutual affection for their absent daughters, and both acted towards one another in the most kindly manner.

During that winter Madame de Sévigné was surprised by the present of a charming little dog, 'white and curly,' which the princesse sent to her. In vain she protested against receiving it, thinking of her favourite Marphise she had left in Paris, and moreover, 'having determined not to engage in attachments of that kind.' So, to be true to her resolution,

when she has been compelled to accept Fidèle, she writes to Madame de Grignan—'I do not attach myself to him, but he is beginning to be fond of me, and I am afraid I shall succumb. . . . . I pray you not to let Marphise know anything about it, for I fear her reproaches.' And a few days after, continuing the pleasantry, she says—'What you say about Fidèle is perfectly just and true; my conduct has been exactly that of a coquette. It is true that I am ashamed of myself, and that I try, as you have seen, to justify my behaviour; for it is certain, that in spite of the "Maxime" of Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld,* I aspired to the standard of having loved but one dog, and I am embarrassed in regard to Marphise. I do not know what is to be done with them; what reasons shall I give her? It throws me insensibly into untruths; at least I shall tell her all the circumstances of my new engagement. It is a position in which I had resolved never to find myself; it is a great example of human frailty.'

Is it possible to give to a trivial circumstance a more charming garb? Fidèle and Marphise play a part when their unknown rivalry is described by Madame de Sévigné. Everything she touches takes a new form. It reminds us of the fairy tale, in which a young princess is endowed with a gift which causes her, every time she speaks, to pour from her mouth

* 'It is possible to find a woman who has had no gallantry, but it is rare to find one who has had but one.'

flowers and precious stones. It was the magic wand of genius which had imparted that power to Madame de Sévigné, and we think the application in her case is not exaggerated.

The year 1676 began for Madame de Sévigné and her son at the Rochers. They both on the first day of the new year sent their best wishes for happiness to Madame de Grignan, to whom her mother says—'And if you consider that my affection enters for something in the composition of your happiness, be assured that you can reckon on it with surety.'

Madame de Sévigné as the months went by, lengthening the time she had been separated from her daughter, became ever more oppressed with that thought, and she represents thus her waking from a dream in which she had imagined herself with her daughter:—

'This is the day to tell you my dream. Learn, that about eight o'clock in the morning, having dreamt of you all night, I imagined much more strongly than usual that we were together, and that you were so gentle, so amiable, and so caressing, that I was transported with tenderness. Upon this I woke, but so sad and oppressed at having lost that dear fancy, that I began to weep and sigh so immoderately as to compel me to call Marie, and with cold water and Eau de la reine d'Hongrie, to shake off the rest of my sleep and free my head and heart of this dreadful oppression. This lasted a quarter of an hour, and all

I can say is, that I have never before found myself in such a state.'

It is probable that when Madame de Sévigné suffered from this painful nightmare she was already under that influence which brought on her first illness. Her constitution had always been robust, and she presumed perhaps too much upon it. When, in the middle of January, she announces to her daughter that a pain in her right side keeps her in bed, Madame de Grignan, to whom her mother was incessantly preaching every precaution, might well attribute her sufferings to those walks prolonged till complete darkness in those 'large alleys,' which Madame de Sévigné persisted in regarding as protected as covered galleries; but youth, which had so often permitted such imprudences with impunity, was no longer there, and the result was a most violent attack of rheumatism, which the fear of frightening her daughter caused Madame de Sévigné to announce as a slight pain. But fortunately by her side the marquise had a most watchful guardian. Her son on that occasion shows himself in a most amiable light, and does so with perfect simplicity. He writes to his sister, that the sufferings of his mother, though they cause him no anxiety, break his heart by their intensity, and that he does all in his 'small power to comfort her.' He then jokes with his sister, to prove to her that his security is not feigned.

The Bien Bon contributed also to the utmost of his power to console and cheer his dear niece; and a

young person, whose name is not given, but for whom Madame de Sévigné seems to have felt a great partiality, shared with the baron the task of solacing her in her hours of suffering. The attack was extremely severe, and was accompanied by violent fever and delirium; but after a few days, when the intensity of the pain had a little subsided, nothing can hinder Madame de Sévigné resuming her correspondence, and as she is unable to write she dictates to her son the following description of her illness:—

'Rochers, Monday, Feb. 3, 1676.

'Guess, my daughter, what is the thing in the world that comes the quickest and goes away the slowest, which brings you nearest to convalescence and takes you furthest from it, which causes you to approach the most agreeable condition and prevents you enjoying it, which gives the most brilliant hopes and delays their realization: can you guess? It is rheumatism. I have been suffering from it twenty-three days. Since the fourteenth day I have been without fever and without pain, and have thought myself able to walk, which is all I desire; but I find myself swollen everywhere—feet, legs, hands, and arms; and this swelling, which is termed my cure, is the cause of my impatience, and would be that of my merit if I were resigned.'

During those days, so wearisome to a person ac-

customed to constant activity, not only those immediately surrounding Madame de Sévigné, but the Princesse de Tarente and Mademoiselle du Plessis vied with each other to show their regard for their neighbour. Madame de Sévigné declares to her daughter that she has been treated like a queen, and above all, that the 'frater has been a consolation I cannot express. He has a pretty knowledge of health and sickness. I had confidence in all he told me. He pitied all my sufferings.'

The convalescence of Madame de Sévigné was troubled by the thought of her son leaving her, and by an event which caused her the most violent emotion. Madame de Grignan was prematurely delivered of a son, and the news caused her mother such a shock as to frighten Charles de Sévigné, who was present when the letter was opened. The favourable progress Madame de Grignan was making would have consoled her mother for the loss of a son to the Grignans. The little child was alive, but was not expected to survive: he, however, struggled through eighteen months of weakness and suffering.

News from Grignan was Madame de Sévigné's greatest consolation after the baron had left her. She had then recourse to the pen of her little secretary, the young girl, whom she describes as 'amiable and pretty,' and for whom she seems to have conceived much affection, which was returned with a very warm heart. One of Madame de Sévigné's greatest anxieties

in not being able to write, was the fear that it would alarm her daughter: she knows no words strong enough to tranquillize her and quiet her solicitude, which she probably judged rather too much after her own feelings in such cases. 'I am in despair at the anxiety I cause you. Distance makes us experience many useless sufferings, and neither our joy nor our sadness are ever in their right place.'

Whatever Madame de Grignan may have experienced as to her mother's illness—and both mother and brother gave her credit for most affectionate anxiety—she failed, as she had often done before, to show any gratitude to those who gave her mother the most disinterested proofs of friendship. Madame de Sévigné felt grateful to all who had taken an interest in her, and she was desirous that her daughter should, for her sake, appear to do so. The Princesse de Tarente had been a most attentive friend to Madame de Sévigné, and had gone so far as to write to Madame de Grignan. No answer, however, was returned, and Madame de Sévigné is forced to say—'I would have wished, my daughter, that you had not allowed the answer to the good princesse to cool. You would have pleased me extremely in promptly joining in the gratitude I owe to her.' And again, for this hint had been without effect—'The good princesse came to see me to-day, and inquired whether I had any news from you. I should much have liked to have had an answer to give her. Solitude and the country

makes one think of such things. I blushed at my thoughts, and she blushed also. I wish that for the affection you bare me, you had paid that debt earlier.'

Madame de Sévigné however left the Rochers, and bade good-bye to her Bonne Tarente without having received that slight satisfaction. We can imagine at what pains Madame de Sévigné must have been sometimes to cover and justify the conduct of her daughter. She had raised her to such a pinnacle, endowed her with so many qualities, that in order to maintain in others that belief she professed in the perfections of her daughter, her task could not have been an easy one; for how much considerate mention, and for how many gracious words never spoken by Madame de Grignan, must her mother have earned her the thanks!

# CHAPTER XXVIII.

1676.

Return of Madame de Sévigné to Paris.—Warmth of her reception.—Rising power of Madame de Maintenon.—Splendour of Madame de Montespan.—Trial of the Marquise de Brinvilliers.—Departure of Madame de Sévigné for Vichy, accompanied by Madame d'Escars.—Life at Vichy.—Solicitude of Madame de Sévigné for her grandchildren.

THE journey back to Paris was slow and tedious. The marquise started on the 24th of March, and reached Paris on the 8th of April. She stopped successively at Laval and Malicorne, the latter the residence of her friend the Marquise de Lavardin; and from both places she wrote to her daughter.

Madame de Sévigné who had already benefited by the change of air, thought to complete her cure by a residence at Bourbon or Vichy, where she hoped Madame de Grignan might be prevailed upon to join her. However great the desire on her part, she could not think of a visit to Grignan, to which place her son-in-law and daughter were pressingly inviting her. Writing from Paris, the reason she gives for her refusal is, that 'the good abbé will not go. He has a thousand things to do here, and he fears the climate. I have not discovered in any treatise on ingratitude that I can

leave him at his age, knowing as I do that such a separation would break his heart, and if he died in my absence, my remorse would leave me no peace.'

To judge what a sacrifice Madame de Sévigné was making to her notion of what was due to her uncle, we must read the lines in the same letter where she expresses her regrets :—'I do not tell you if I desire to see you, or if I regret the days of my life which are passing. I complain sorrowfully of spending it without you. One would imagine we have another life in which we enjoy each other's presence and affection ; the present is our all, which we dissipate to find death at last. I am moved by that thought.'

Madame de Grignan, in answer to her mother, proposed joining her at Vichy for a fortnight, and then returning to her own home. This to the fond mother seemed the hardest of temptations. Her wish, her hope, her entreaty was, that Madame de Grignan should meet her at Vichy, return with her to Livry, and wait there for Monsieur de Grignan, who would be with them early in the winter. Such a proposition seemed rational to Madame de Sévigné, who says—'For you owe me a little of your time for the consolation of my life.'

To see her daughter for a fortnight appeared to her only as an addition to her pain : she puts it to Madame de Grignan in every way that could touch her heart, recalling how ill she had been, and how that dear presence would console her. To all this Madame de Grignan, uninfluenced by her husband, opposed a de-

termined negative, offering again to meet her mother at Vichy, but nothing more, alleging that her husband's duties imperiously demanded her presence in Provence until they could both together start for Paris. It was in vain that in every letter Madame de Sévigné strove to alter a resolution so contrary to her wishes.

Her return to Paris had been as usual the occasion for all her friends to show her their affection. Corbinelli was there the very first day to relieve her yet trembling hand from the task of writing. On her arrival she encountered at her door, coming to inquire when she was expected, Mesdames de Villars, de St.-Géran, and d'Heudicourt. All three were in the intimacy of the marquise, and she mentions them frequently in her correspondence. The Marquise de Villars had been Mademoiselle de Bellefonds, full of wit and caustic pleasantries; her husband, on account of his fine figure, had received the surname of 'Orondat,' one of the most charming heroes of the 'Cyrus.' He had several times filled the post of ambassador, and both he and his wife were in constant communication with Madame de Sévigné. The Comtesse de St.-Géran, the intimate friend of the Marquise de Villars, was wholly devoted to the court and its pleasures. Madame d'Heudicourt is often alluded to as the 'tall woman,' who could inform Madame de Grignan of all the intrigues of St.-Germain. Madame de Vins, who was also one of the first visitors of the marquise on her return to Paris, must be remembered as a dearer friend of Madame

de Sévigné: she was the sister of Madame de Pomponne, and even before her marriage to the Marquis de Vins, had a great share and exercised great influence in all the affairs over which her brother-in-law presided. It was through her, and through her interest, that Madame de Sévigné thought she would be able to serve Monsieur de Grignan. Madame de Vins was at this time quite young, and had already been in frequent correspondence with Madame de Sévigné, who while in Brittany frequently mentions having heard from her. On her return to Paris she extols Madame de Vins' amiability, her affection for Madame de Grignan, and her desire to oblige her.

One by one every friend of Madame de Sévigné is mentioned to her daughter. It is clear that the marquise experienced great satisfaction in finding herself once more surrounded by all those familiar faces. 'Madame de Coulanges is always extremely amiable. . . . Corbinelli is, as you know, ever appearing and disappearing. Our friendship is solid. . . . I shall make your reproaches to La Mousse. . . . D'Hacqueville, always occupied with the turmoil of business, and always full of good qualities. . . . Madame de la Fayette, with her low fever, and ever good company at her house. . . . Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld is as you left him. . . . The good Troche says she is going to Anjou. She is, as usual, going and coming: people say she is the female D'Hacqueville.'

The news of the court found its place naturally in

the letters written from Paris. Even when in Brittany, Madame de Sévigné forwarded to her daughter the particulars of any event she heard of through her friends—Madame de Montespan in her glory, and Madame de Maintenon, now a marquise, considered and in favour, are watched, and each action is commented on.

Already Madame de Sévigné had reported to her daughter those rumours tending to prove that the two friends, once so united, were more than at variance, and that hatred had taken the place of affection. 'The Friend,' (l'amie—the designation of Madame de Maintenon) 'is of a pride which causes her to revolt against the orders of the other [Madame de Montespan]. She is ready to obey the father, but not the mother. She will undertake the journey for his sake, but not for hers. She informs him of everything, and her of nothing. One scolds the Friend [l'ami—Louis XIV] for having so much friendship for that haughty person, but it is believed it will not last, unless the success of the journey changes those hearts. This secret has been travelling under ground for the last six months: I think it will rather surprise you. The friends of the Friend [l'amie] are afflicted at all this.'

The journey alluded to is one Madame de Maintenon was on the point of taking to the Pyrenees for the benefit of the Duc du Maine, who was unable to walk. His delicate health was the object of his governess's most watchful care, and she bore him through life the

most tender affection. A few months after this, the account of the return of Madame de Maintenon reached the Rochers, and is transmitted to Provence:—'Nothing was more agreeable than the surprise reserved for the king. He was expecting Monsieur du Maine on the following day. When he saw him enter his room, led only by the hand of Madame de Maintenon, he was transported with joy. On arriving, Monsieur de Louvois went to call on this governess. She supped at Madame de Richelieu's, some kissing her hands, others her dress; and she laughing at it all, if she be not altered; but I am told she is.'

These are the first precise indications of the growing influence of one who, as Madame Scarron, was only patronized before. Madame de Montespan, whose care it had been to inspire the king with affection for his children, and which brought Madame de Maintenon under his notice, could not as yet feel anything but impatience: no thought of being supplanted in the king's heart by a woman so inferior to herself in every outward respect could cross her mind. She was still in the plenitude of her power, and two children she gave to the king—the second Mademoiselle de Blois, who became Duchesse d'Orléans, and the Comte de Toulouse—yet unborn. She enjoyed such triumphs as going with the queen to the Carmélites to visit Sœur Louise de la Miséricorde, and inquiring of her whether she were as pleased as she had heard, and what message she had for the 'brother of MONSIEUR [the king].'

The two answers were modest and becoming:—'I am not pleased, but contented;' and to the king:—'Say what you will, madame; say what you will.' 'Add to this,' says Madame de Sévigné, 'all the grace, intelligence, and modesty that you can imagine.'

These trifling events, which interest even posterity, had a double value for one who, like Madame de Grignan, was the contemporary and had shared the early triumphs of Mesdemoiselles de Mortemart and la Vallière. It was well known that those women would hereafter belong to history, and their every word and action were regarded with attention.

If one would judge clearly of facts, is it not necessary to be acquainted with all those developments? To know only that Louis XIV forgot Madame de Montespan for Madame de Maintenon, would seem like a caprice, but to see day by day that silent working of the mind which changed the most pleasure-loving monarch into the austere companion of an austere woman, is a study: it prepares us for that great alteration in all things—it is autumn, which announces the forthcoming winter. The hesitation, the fluctuations of the king's conscience; his struggles with his passion, and his rising bigotry; the eclipses, and then the more brilliant effulgence of the Marquise de Montespan, show the human heart in all its littleness and poverty. Neither rank nor beauty could clothe human frailty and faults: their misery contrasts only the more strongly with the surrounding grandeur.

But there was news of another nature to announce to Madame de Grignan, for it was in 1676 that the celebrated Marquise de Brinvilliers gave to the world the scandal of her crimes and death. This woman, who has come down to posterity as a murderess, belonged to the nobility of France. She was the daughter of Dreux Aubray, Lieutenant-civil, and was married in 1651 to the Marquis de Brinvilliers. Depraved from her youth, she successively poisoned, with the complicity of her lover, Sainte-Croix, all those whose fortune she coveted : her father, her husband, her children, none were spared. On the death of Sainte-Croix papers establishing their mutual culpability were discovered. The Marquise de Brinvilliers fled, but was overtaken and arrested. In 1676 the attention of the whole of France was directed to her, and curiosity was at its highest. Her cynicism equalled her crimes, and while in prison she asked permission to play at cards to pass the time.

'Nothing is talked of here,' writes Madame de Sévigné, 'but the sayings and doings of La Brinvilliers. Have you ever heard of her fearing to omit in her confession that she had poisoned her father? The trifles she is in fear of forgetting are admirable. She loved Sainte-Croix, and wished to marry him. With this object she several times poisoned her husband. Sainte-Croix, who did not want such a terrible wife, gave the husband an antidote; so that between these alternatives, repeated five or six times, some-

times poisoned and sometimes cured, he is still alive, and now comes forward to solicit mercy for his dear half.'

When Madame de Sévigné is on the point of starting for Vichy she regrets her inability to continue to tell her daughter what may be spoken in regard to the Brinvilliers. She must not be accused of speaking lightly of so heinous a creature: pity she could not inspire, and when Madame de Sévigné was writing to her daughter she was as it were speaking to her. Her written word in this case must not be considered as a serious and meditated expression either of blame or scorn: it is the impression of the moment, the instant echo of what has just been spoken. Those letters are conversations, and if every passing joke, every word that savours of irreverence were to be brought home to each and all, who could be called just? Madame de Sévigné was writing to one with whom she felt no need of restraint, and in that free intercourse she abandons herself to every sensation of the hour.

Before quitting Paris, Madame de Sévigné gave a supper to her most intimate friends:—'Madame de Coulanges and her husband, Madame de la Troche, Monsieur de la Trousse, Mademoiselle de Montgeron, and Corbinelli' are coming to 'bid me farewell by eating a pigeon-pie.' After they have left, she adds in the last lines written to Madame de Grignan before retiring to rest—'My company has just left me. Mesdames de Pomponne, de Vins, de Villars, and

St.-Géran have been here; I have embraced them all for you.'

Those leave-takings were all without pain. That which went closer to the heart of Madame de Sévigné was her separation from her kind Bien Bon. Already since her return from the Rochers had she gone through the ordeal of seeing her son start to join the army. The king in person was in Flanders, and the French army and that of the Prince of Orange found themselves face to face near the farm of Heurtebise on that 10th of May, when Madame de Sévigné was eating her pigeon-pie. The two armies, however, did not engage, much to the dissatisfaction of the French troops, who felt sure of victory. The opportunity thus lost to Sévigné of distinguishing himself was seized a few weeks later, when he proved his valour at the siege of Aire.

Madame de Sévigné had been extremely sad at losing her son, the charm of whose society, had there been no dearer tie, must have made his absence regretted; but he had now another claim on her heart —his tender nursing of her at the Rochers.

One separation disposes us to feel more acutely another; it is as the drop that causes the full cup to overflow. The disappointed hope of seeing Madame de Grignan, and the dangers to which Sévigné was exposed, added to the sadness with which the marquise saw the moment come that would put a few days' journey between herself and the Abbé de Coulanges.

'This separation, though but a short one, costs him a great deal. I am anxious about his health; heartache is not good when one is old. I shall do my duty in returning here, as it is the only occasion in my life when I can show him my affection, and I shall sacrifice to it even the thought of going to Grignan. There are circumstances under which the dearest sentiments give way to gratitude.'

Madame de Sévigné did not, however, travel alone to Vichy; her companion, to whom the abbé had intrusted the care of his niece's health, was Madame d'Escars, called by Madame de Sévigné the 'bonne d'Escars,' with whose society she seems to have been much pleased. They travelled to Vichy in the track of Madame de Montespan, who was resorting to Bourbon for the benefit of her health. 'We follow the steps of Madame de Montespan. We inquire at every place what she has said, what she has done, what she has eaten, how she has slept. She is in a coach drawn by six horses, and with her is the petite de Thianges. She has another coach behind with the same number of horses, in which are her six women. She has two travelling vans, six mules, ten or twelve men on horseback, without reckoning the officers of her household. Her suite consists of forty-five persons. She finds her room and bed ready, and eats with a good appetite.'

The progress of Madame de Montespan resembled that of a queen; everywhere she was treated as the

dispenser of all favours, and met with petitions; her charity was demanded, and she scattered her gold lavishly. It was that very influence which caused her to be regretted: it was the power she possessed over the king's mind, and which she often used for noble and good purposes, which distinguishes her entirely from Mademoiselle de la Vallière, whose humility was too near akin to baseness. The pride and arrogance of Madame de Montespan, her desire to be a voice in the state, were as a gorgeous mantle over her faults. La Vallière, bearing awkwardly her ducal crown, conscious of her guilt, and ashamed of it, proclaimed it by that very attitude, and never called forth those marks of deference which came home naturally to the proud Mortemart.

At Bourbon, where Madame de Montespan appears with hands full of bounty, she is solicited by one who had known also, in a different way, the very giddiness of prosperity. Madame de Sévigné heard from Madame Fouquet herself, whom she saw at Moulins, where she stopped on her journey, an account of the interview, and she relates it to her daughter. Madame de Montespan had 'received her very kindly; she listened to her with gentleness and an admirable appearance of compassion. God put in Madame Fouquet's mouth those words which could best plead her cause. She spoke of her ardent desire to be imprisoned with her husband, and of her hope that Providence would on fitting occasions give Madame de

Montespan a recollection of her, and pity for her misfortunes.'

Madame Fouquet, who was thus, 'without baseness or importunity,' pleading her cause, must, had Madame de Montespan's heart been susceptible to maternal tenderness, have excited in it the greatest wish to serve a woman to whom her own son, the one born to Monsieur de Montespan, was at that moment intrusted. Her husband, who had put on mourning for his wife's shame as for her death, and ignored her existence to her last day, had left with Madame Fouquet his 'handsome and clever' boy of ten, who, alas! grew into the most servile of courtiers, and became, under the name of Duc d'Antin, a favourite of Louis XIV.

Madame de Montespan dreams but of love and power, and every day there comes from the army a courier bearing her assurances of that tenderness which caused all heads to bow before her.

Madame de Sévigné arrived at Vichy, after a prosperous journey, on the 18th of May. She was met on her arrival by the Duchesse de Brissac and the Chanoinesse de Longueval, who had preceded her to Vichy, where they were staying together. 'Monsieur de St.-Hérem, Monsieur de la Fayette, the Abbé Dorat, Plancy, and others followed in a second carriage and on horseback. I was received with great joy. Madame de Brissac took me to sup at her house.'

At Vichy Madame de Sévigné was immediately surrounded by affectionate friends: this alone speaks for

her popularity. Everywhere she was welcomed. We can imagine her smiling face, her ready wit and good humour must have warmed the hearts of all by her presence. The mode of life at Vichy is minutely described by the marquise. As early as six in the morning they all met at the spring, where 'one drinks and makes a very ugly face.' At twelve they dine, and after dinner the small party assembles at one or the other's house. There we see the handsome coquette, the Duchesse de Brissac, formerly Mademoiselle de St.-Simon, whom her brother the duc describes as 'equally beautiful and modest,' but who after her marriage to a man whose low vices were his wife's excuse, earned for herself another reputation. The charming duchesse then plays at cards with St.-Hérem and Plancy, Madame de Sévigné and the 'Chanoine' read Ariosto, while country girls amuse them with their dancing. 'At five we drive in a lovely country, at seven we sup lightly, and at ten we go to bed.'

The beauty of the neighbourhood of Vichy was for Madame de Sévigné a constant source of pleasure. She is also delighted with the grace of the peasants who dance before her, and she longs for her daughter to see them. We must remark how charmed Madame de Sévigné always professes to be when witnessing good dancing. At Vitré she praises Monsieur de Locmaria, and at Vichy she is enchanted with the bourrées.* The reason is, that dancing was then an

* A peasants' dance.

art, to excel in which was a distinction not easily acquired, and Madame de Sévigné had been, and Madame de Grignan also, celebrated for that accomplishment. The minuets, branles, and passe-pieds demanded, as we have said, a more graceful carriage than is necessary in our day to walk through a quadrille or turn in a valse. One thing leads to another: the security of being graceful, the easy carriage of a handsome figure, was calculated to allow that person to show whatever wit and intelligence she was endowed with. It was an assurance remote from boldness, but contrary to timidity. We are convinced that many men of parts are silent and overlooked only because they are awkward, and that if minuets were now the fashion, they would reveal that intelligence Nature has given to them. Conversation is brilliant as dancing is honoured: the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are the proof of one side of the proposition, and we venture to say the nineteenth century is the proof of the other. Every day we see examples of awkwardness and timidity acting as an obstacle in life; and neither birth nor wealth gives that security which is obtained by an easy presence—both are to be found where the other is wanting. In those days of curtseys, when men could not enter a room without a profound obeisance; when to walk, to sit, or to stand received every attention, the mind, as unfettered as the body was free, could shine forth, and witty sayings

and repartees could be spoken with boldness and assurance.

There is another observation which suggests itself when reading about those minor events of our existence, and which in truth are certain indications of the spirit of the age. People in the seventeenth century were always, at every hour of the day, prepared to show themselves to their acquaintances. A constant effort had to be made, and that strain, both of mind and body, we are convinced helped to a vigorous expansion of both. Ease was little considered; appearance and effect always. At her toilette a lady received her visitors (we do not commend; we simply remind); when slightly indisposed, friends and admirers hastened to relieve the dullness of the sick-room: there was as it were a constant battle with decay or destruction. Women were both hardier and stronger; the very fashions, the tight straight bodice, helped women to stiffen themselves against the attacks of age, while the elegant richness of the dress of the men demanded a constant effort to carry well a costume which when slovenly became ridiculous. The head, surmounted by a ponderous wig, must be erect; the arms and hands, embarrassed by large sleeves and falling lace, must be moved leisurely; the walk must be firm and light; the attitudes selected with care, best to display the yards of ribbon of the *canons* and the bows of the shoe.

Our simplicity is the shore on which we wreck all

that added to the pleasure of social intercourse: elegance and politeness go together, as neglect and rudeness follow on each other's steps. When we begin by being indifferent as to what is thought of us by others, we are very near becoming indifferent to everything but selfish gratification. Put aside the desire to please, and what inducement remains to frequent society? why submit to any restraints it commands? Day by day the increasing adoration of personal comforts marks the doom of what was once called wit, and conversation becomes a mere exchange of busy nothings. Silence is now the mark of sagacity; rudeness the livery of superiority—so be it!

To return to Madame de Sévigné: let us read the description she gives Madame de Grignan of an indisposition of the Duchesse de Brissac:—'Madame de Brissac was ill to-day; she was in bed, handsome, and her hair dressed in a manner to infatuate the whole world. I wish you could have seen what she made of her sufferings, and the use she made of her eyes, and of her hands which lay on the coverlet, and her attitudes, and the compassion she demanded. Filled with admiration and tenderness I contemplated that work of Nature, and found it so perfect that my attention must have resembled an astonishment for which I believe I shall reap the thanks. And consider that the scene was for the Abbé Bayard, St.-Hérem, Montjeu, and Plancy.'

At Vichy, news was scarce, and as the Duchesse de

Brissac was not ill every day, there were few facts to impart to Madame de Grignan, but always plenty of subjects to write about. Again and again Madame de Sévigné returns to the topic nearest to her heart—her daughter's return. Firm in her resolution not to consent to her coming to Vichy for a short stay, she explains why:—'If you had been one of those persons who allow themselves to be persuaded and carried off, I should have hoped to take you back with me against your will; but you are one from whom it is useless to hope concessions of that kind. I know your tone and resolution, and doing so I prefer that you should reserve all your affection and all your money to come this winter and give me the joy and consolation of embracing you.'

It was with a heavy heart that Madame de Sévigné reflected how near she was to Grignan, and how comparatively short her journey there would be. She begged not to be reminded of the vicinity of Lyons, and when preparing to return to Paris the struggles of her feelings, of what she owed to her Bien Bon, and what she felt for her daughter, make her exclaim:—'And this is then what is termed right principles and gratitude; I am not surprised that there should be so little hurry in the exercise of those fine virtues.'

Madame de Sévigné, when her thoughts reverted thus with tender regret to Grignan and Provence, was not thinking of her daughter only: her little grandchildren had their share in her affection. At that

time she was experiencing a solicitude she dared in her fond idolatry hardly express to Madame de Grignan. The little Marie-Blanche, who for three years had been under her grandmother's tender care, was now with her parents, but to be banished two years later. She was not pretty; there was an heir to provide for; the eldest daughter must therefore make room for that fortunate brother, so a convent was the home found for her at the early age of five. Madame de Sévigné from afar felt painfully for her cherished little one, but the other day the joy of her hearth, and she writes to her daughter—'My heart is oppressed at the thought of my little granddaughter. She will be in despair at having left you, and being, as you say, in prison.' A few days later she repeats—'My heart is heavy about my dear little one. Poor child, she is then placed! She concealed her little grief! I pity her if you love her, and if she loves you as much as we loved each other. But you possess courage which always serves you on these occasions. God would have favoured me by endowing me with as much.'

Madame de Sévigné could never bring herself to combat openly any resolution of her daughter. On that occasion, when truly unhappy at the fate of her little goddaughter, she strives to awaken pity in the mother's heart, and expresses her grief to suggest to Madame de Grignan what the hardship was. When she is answered by Madame de Grignan that the child is happy, she accepts rather too promptly the mother's

assurance. 'I am delighted to know that my little one is cheerful and happy: it was the sadness of her little heart that afflicted me.'

The child of five may no doubt have smiled again quickly, but from what comes out in after years the sadness of her young heart was great, and her religious vocation entirely forced upon her. Madame de Sévigné strove continually to obtain for her a future more in accordance with her wishes, but in vain. She, however, succeeded in rescuing Pauline, the second daughter, from a destiny similar to that of her sister. Children were a great incumbrance to those proud, poor houses, where one son was to be endowed with all the wealth that could be treasured up, and the convent was an honourable forgetfulness for the daughters, whose meagre dower swelled the fortune of the heir to the name.

The little marquis was the object of Madame de Grignan's care and attention: on him rested all the hopes of her vain-glorious heart; and when she finds that he is shy in his babyhood, she alarms herself for his future. Her mother, ever wiser, answers her fears: —'I wish to speak to you of the little marquis. Let not his timidity cause you any anxiety. Consider that the charming marquis [Villeroy] trembled up to the age of ten or twelve, and that La Troche was so frightened at everything that his mother could hardly look at him. These are men brave enough to reassure you. It is nothing but childishness; and in growing,

instead of fearing the bugbear, they fear blame; they dread not being thought as much of as others, and that is sufficient to render them brave enough, and to face death a thousand times. Do not be impatient.'

All who were dependent on Madame de Grignan owed thanks to Madame de Sévigné. Her advice, ever wise, moderate, and just, was, there is no doubt, respected by her daughter, who was sensible of the sagacity and admirable wisdom of her mother. Constantly through the years of the childhood and youth of the marquis and Pauline, their cause is pleaded and their faults excused by the absent grandmother. The impatient comtesse, hurrying to conclusions, is restrained; her hand is guided and made more gentle.

The Marquis de Grignan did become what Madame de Sévigné foresaw, perfectly brave; but to her it was owing that his childish timidity, respected and gently treated, early vanished. There seems to have been hardly any question on which Madame de Sévigné was not competent to give advice, and yet she gives it with perfect modesty, never dictating. Different indeed seems to have been the imperious and decided Madame de Grignan, whose word and resolution were uttered as law. Aware as Madame de Sévigné was of her daughter's temper, still we perceive she always hoped to be able to prevail against it; and when finally disappointed she cannot help alluding, somewhat in anger,

to Madame de Grignan's philosophy, which to us reads like another word for indifference. 'If instead of philosophizing so much, you had granted me with frankness and goodwill that time which I asked of you, it would have been a proof of your affection very well placed; but I insist on nothing: you know best your own affairs, and I perfectly understand that they may need your presence.'

The resignation of Madame de Sévigné was in great part feigned, as Madame de Grignan must have known; but it was a pleasure for that fond mother to try and persuade herself of her daughter's affection, and the anxiety Madame de Grignan professed for her mother's health served as a pretext for it.

This first illness of Madame de Sévigné had, in a mind already disposed to seriousness, excited reflections of a grave nature. Her desire to attain that devout state she judged necessary for her eternal salvation became every day greater. She is constantly exchanging sentiments in regard to this with her daughter. 'You inquire of me whether I am *dévote*. Alas! no, my child, and I am very sorry for it; but it seems to me, however, that I detach myself a little from what is termed the world. Old age and illness give leisure to make great reflections.' At the same time she owns that what she withdraws from the public she gives to her daughter, who ever engrosses her thoughts. She begs her to tell her every detail of her house, her room, her balconies, her terraces; everything that

belongs to Madame de Grignan becomes a source of curiosity and interest to her mother.

The three weeks at Vichy passed rapidly for the marquise: she had benefited by the waters, enjoyed the society of her friends, and admired the charming country she was in. Other persons known both to mother and daughter had arrived at Vichy. She speaks of the 'bonne Péquigny,' mother to the Duc de Chaulnes, who in her desire to resemble Madame de Sévigné did everything in imitation of her, forgetful of her seventy-six years. When, however, there was something to praise, the marquise soon forgot what was ridiculous, and speaking of Madame de Péquigny, she says—'She is the only person whom I ever saw exercise without control the virtue of liberality. She has two thousand five hundred louis, of which she is determined not to take back one. She gives, she clothes, she feeds the poor; if she is asked for a pistole she gives two. I had only imagined what I see in her. It is true that she has an income of twenty-five thousand écus a year, and that in Paris she does not spend ten. This is what makes her magnificent; and I think she is to be praised for having the will with the power—two things generally always separated.'

Well might Madame de Sévigné say on another occasion, alluding to the words of Solon, 'that none are to be praised before death,'—'This is very provoking for me, who am fond of praising what is praiseworthy

—how wait? I shall continue my own way, even if I am to alter afterwards.'

We have insisted before on this most amiable side of Madame de Sévigné's character, and it is in accordance with that sense of justice which animated her. She ignored no feeling that elevates the mind, and naturally her soul found itself raised to that high level which others labour for years to attain.

# CHAPTER XXIX.

1676.

Madame de Sévigné leaves Vichy.—Her reception by Madame Fouquet, Madame de Fiennes, the Comtesse de Vaux.—Arrival in Paris.—Trial and execution of the Marquise de Brinvilliers.—Madame de Sévigné's description of the court at Versailles.—She returns to Livry.—The Baron de Sévigné distinguishes himself at Aire.—Advice to Madame de Grignan on the education of her son.—Declining favour of Madame de Montespan.—Madame de Coulanges at Versailles.—Her illness.—Life of Madame de Sévigné at Livry.—Peculiarity of her disposition.

MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ left Vichy on the 14th of June, and as usual she wrote to Madame de Grignan at every place where she rested on the journey. Her first stoppage is at Langlar, the country house of the Abbé Bayard, whose visits she had several times received at Vichy. She is pleased with the beauty of the place, with the liberty the host allows his guests to enjoy, and immediately she wishes her daughter by her side. Her thoughts lead her back to that ever-recurring recollection—that life is speeding away and she separated from Madame de Grignan. 'It puts me in mind,' she says, 'of a man in Brittany who spoke to me of the avarice of a certain priest, and said quite

naturally, "In a word, madame, he is a man who eats hake all his life that he may eat salmon after his death." I found that just, and make the application of it now. Duty, and the consideration of the world, cause us to eat hake all our lives, in order to eat salmon afterwards.'

The journey back was painful to Madame de Sévigné; every step she took increasing the distance between her and her daughter. 'I am going ever further from you; but it cannot be without sorrow or without reflecting on the laws we impose on ourselves, and the martyrdom we suffer in preferring so often our duty to our inclination: this is a fine example of it.'

As at every town or village she rested, Madame de Sévigné was met by some friend eager to welcome her, she could at least indulge in the pleasure of talking of Madame de Grignan. At Moulins she sees Madame Fouquet, who receives her with affection; at Montargis, the governor and his wife, Madame de Fiennes, welcome her; at Vaux, the eldest son of Fouquet, the Comte de Vaux, gives her a great supper, and no doubt in those gardens where she had known the surintendant in the plenitude of his power. In presence of all the wonders his magnificence had created, her thoughts reverted sadly to the solitary prisoner at Pignerol.

In Paris, which she reached on the last day of June, Madame de Sévigné was greeted with delight by her kind uncle, who in his extreme satisfaction found no

better expression of his joy than by wishing her to experience a similar one soon. Mesdames de Villars, de St.-Géran, d'Heudicourt, Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld, the Coulanges, Mesdames de Sanzei and d'Hacqueville, all those friends of the marquise hasten to visit her as if her absence had been of months instead of weeks. Madame de la Fayette was absent at Chantilly. Bussy, who was in Paris with a permit, came also to visit his cousin. Being obliged to keep her room for a few days after her return from Vichy, Madame de Sévigné received on all sides proofs of the consideration in which she was held by the influx of friends who came to bear her company. Once more is she informed of all the news of the court and town. Madame de Brinvilliers was still occupying public attention. Her end was near; her sentence had been pronounced, and Madame de Sévigné gives her daughter an account of a spectacle which revolts our more humane feelings, and which was presented to the capital of France on a bright summer's evening.

'It is done! Brinvilliers is in the air. Her poor little body was, after execution, thrown into a great fire, and her ashes scattered to the winds. . . . She was condemned yesterday, and this morning her sentence was read to her. It was, that she was to make apology at Notre Dame, to be beheaded, her body burnt, and her ashes scattered to the winds. She was put to the torture, and said there was no need for it; she would tell all. In fact, she gave an account of her

life, which is more dreadful even than what was imagined. She gave poison to her father ten times (she did not succeed with him), to her brothers, and several others, and in everything love and intrigue were mingled. After this confession they did not, however, spare her the torture: she added nothing to what she had already said. She asked to speak to Monsieur le Procureur-général, and remained an hour with him. The subject of their discourse is not yet known. At six o'clock she was led in a shift, with a rope round her neck, to make an apology at Notre Dame; then she was put in the cart, where I saw her, thrown back on the straw, with a low cap and in her shift, a doctor at one side, the executioner at the other; verily it made me shudder. Those who saw the execution say she ascended the scaffold with great courage.'

The miserable creature, thus submitted to an ordeal too frightful to imagine, had gone through all the cruel formalities of justice of those days with indomitable courage: she had heard her sentence read without fear or weakness; she had ascended the scaffold alone and barefooted, and for a quarter of an hour submitted to the sinister preparations of the executioner. 'It was dreadful cruelty, and there was a general murmur,' writes Madame de Sévigné.

We have dwelt upon this incident, revolting as it is, in order to give an idea of the Paris of those days, with its heaving crowds pressing on the tracks of the

cart that was bearing that great criminal to an ignominious death, but not to prove that we are any better or more humane than people were in the seventeenth century. On the contrary, we are convinced that the crowd of our day is as ferocious and bloodthirsty as in the days of Madame de Sévigné; the difference is in civilization, and there we think the difference is really an important one. Races are like individuals; see how a child, the most affectionate, can quietly witness an accident, or an act of cruelty which revolts us. Is that child's little heart more insensible than ours? No; every year marks in children a progress in the faculty of compassion; it grows with them. The very little ones are naturally cruel; they inflict pain, because they understand not what it is; it requires a certain amount of reasoning to comprehend the sufferings of others; a crowd of low rabble are the more insensible to reason as they are more ignorant. Suffering is a privilege of intelligence; the more developed our minds, the quicker we apprehend every impression. In the nineteenth century there is in every crowd a much larger number of persons endowed with the faculty to receive impressions than there was in the seventeenth century. The individuals taken separately are no better, but a crowd is more imaginative. It is one reason, we think, why such an execution as that of Madame de Brinvilliers would not be possible in our day.

We will now turn from that sad spectacle, and

to refresh ourselves will follow Madame de Sévigné to Versailles, to become acquainted at one view with the enchanting sight that royalty, beauty, and magnificence gave to the world, that is to France. St.-Germain was now finally given up, and Versailles, that 'favourite without merit,' definitively adopted.

'Let me inform you, my child, of a change of scene which will appear to you as agreeable as it does to everyone,' writes Madame de Sévigné. 'I went to Versailles on Saturday with the Villars. This is how things are disposed. You are acquainted with the toilette of the queen, the mass, the dinner; but it is now no longer necessary to be suffocated while their majesties are at table, for at three o'clock the king, the queen, MONSIEUR, MADAME, MADEMOISELLE, all the princes and princesses there are, Madame de Montespan and all her suite, all the courtiers, all the ladies, in a word, what is called the court of France, find themselves in that fine apartment of the king that you know. All is furnished divinely, all is magnificent. One knows not what it is to be hot, and it is easy to pass from one room to another without the slightest crush. A game of *reversi* shapes and settles everything. It consists of the king (Madame de Montespan holds the card), MONSIEUR, the queen and Madame de Soubise, Dangeau and company, Langlée and company. A thousand louis are thrown on the table; there are no other markers. I saw Dangeau play, and I admired how ignorant we are compared with him. He

thinks of nothing but his affairs, and wins where others lose. He neglects nothing; he profits by all; he is never inattentive; in fact, his good management defies fortune; therefore two hundred thousand francs in ten days, one hundred thousand écus in one month are inscribed in his book of gains. He said I was taking part in his game, and therefore I was seated very agreeably and conveniently. I bowed to the king, as you taught me to do, and he returned it as if I had been young and handsome. The queen talked to me of my illness; she also spoke of you. Monsieur le Duc caressed me a thousand times, of which he thinks nothing. The Maréchal de Lorges spoke to me of the Chevalier de Grignan, in fact, *tutti quanti;* you know what it is to receive a word from each person on your way. Madame de Montespan talked to me of Bourbon, and begged me to tell her about Vichy, and how I liked it. She told me that Bourbon, instead of curing one knee, had made both bad. I found her "back much flatter," as the Maréchal de la Meilleraye used to say; but seriously, her beauty is surprising. Her figure is much slimmer than it was, and her complexion, her eyes, her lips are as before. She was dressed in *point de France;* her hair in a thousand curls, the two on her temples falling low on her cheeks; black ribbons on her head, and pearls of the Maréchale de l'Hôpital, improved by ornaments of diamonds of the greatest beauty; three or four pins, no cap; in fact, a triumphant beauty to be admired

by all the ambassadors. She had learnt that complaints had been made that she hindered the whole of France from seeing the king. She has given him back, as you see, and you cannot imagine the joy there is, or of what magnificence it makes the court. That agreeable confusion without confusion of all that is most select, lasts from three o'clock till six. If couriers arrive the king retires to read his letters, and then returns. There is always some music for him to listen to, and it has a good effect. He converses with those ladies accustomed to that honour. Finally, play is abandoned at the hour I mentioned; there is no trouble in settling the accounts, there being no counters. . . . At six o'clock they enter their carriages, the king, Madame de Montespan, MONSIEUR, Madame de Thianges, and the good D'Heudicourt on the *strapontin*,* which she regards as paradise. You know how the carriages are made; there is no looking at one another, everybody is turned the same way. The queen is in another with the princesses, and the rest grouped according to their fancy. Some go in gondolas on the canal, where there is music. At ten o'clock all return, when a comedy is performed; midnight strikes, and then *media noche*. This is how Saturday was spent. We left when the carriages came for the drive.

'To tell you how many persons spoke to me of you, how often you were inquired after, how many ques-

* An inferior seat.

tions were put to me which waited for no answer, how many I spared, how little it was cared for, and how much less I cared about it, would be to describe to you from nature the *iniqua corte*. Still it was never more agreeable, and it is to be desired that it may continue so. Madame de Nevers was extremely handsome, modest, and unaffected; her beauty reminds me of you. Monsieur de Nevers is always the same; his wife loves him passionately. Mademoiselle de Thianges' beauty is more regular than that of her sister. Monsieur du Maine is incomparable; his intelligence is surprising; he says things that are not to be conceived. Madame de Maintenon, Madame de Thianges, Guelphs and Ghibellines; reflect that all are assembled. MADAME made me a thousand civilities for the sake of the good Princesse de Tarente. Madame de Monaco was in Paris.'

It was indeed a strange sight, that of so many hostile parties all gathered together. St.-Simon repeatedly proves that Louis XIV, by his preference for the children born to him by Madame de Montespan, altered the whole face of the court; that he lavished dignities on the Duc du Maine and his sisters, while princes of the royal blood were left unprovided for. It was then the commencement of that confusion of rank: Louis XIV did not follow in his conduct the steps of any of his predecessors: he made known his will, and it became law. Madame de Sévigné and all the court were astonished when they saw the position given to

the children of Madame de Montespan, and to their governess, for it was in that light Madame de Maintenon was still regarded; and her extreme favour, then visible to all, was attributed in great part to that connection with the king. If on one side the queen bore the bitter humiliation of seeing the courtiers more eager for the glances of her rival than her own, that 'triumphant beauty' was day by day witnessing the increasing rise and power of one whom her hand had rescued from poverty and dependence, and who, arrived at maturity, was robbing her of her power and of her children.

From the 'iniquitous court,' as Madame de Sévigné so justly characterizes it in Italian, she turned with satisfaction, we are convinced, to her true freedom in the solitude of Livry. The season was oppressively hot: July and August could not be agreeable in Paris, and the shady walks of Livry offered repose and ease. There is a remark to make on the ever-renewed interest with which Madame de Sévigné found herself at Livry. The constant freshness and intensity of her feelings were such that nothing that is beautiful or agreeable, nothing of nature, nothing of the sentiments of the heart, was ever lost to her eyes; while to her mind nothing lost its charm because often witnessed or often repeated. Whenever she gazes on green trees, on fresh meadows, be it near Paris, be it after a sojourn of months at the Rochers, everything is new to her. Madame de Sévigné's

mind, ever young, like all that is immortal, received every impression with the same vividness it had in the first hour her eyes learnt to discern what was really beautiful. This is the great secret of that wonderful variety in monotony which her letters, the outpourings of her heart, present; they never weary because she who wrote them never knew weariness.

It is wonderful with what ease Madame de Sévigné passes from one subject to another, and yet the perfect harmony of the whole is never disturbed. It is not that she is at any pains to lead up to her transitions: no; a full stop, and one topic takes the place of another, but in every line there breathes that same inspiration which preserves even the most trivial anecdote from oblivion. 'Everything becomes interesting as soon as it has come from her hands; she herself speaks, and one never tires of hearing her. It is as the melodious voice of a singer, which makes us oblivious of the dull common words of the libretto, only to be charmed by the music and by the skill of the interpreter.

Madame de Sévigné received at Livry the frequent visits of her numerous friends. She welcomed them with pleasure, but her principal and real delight in the country was in the enjoyment of the calm beauties of Nature, in reading her favourite authors, and, above all, in receiving those ever-wished-for letters from her daughter. News of her, and news of her son, was always anxiously expected. Charles de Sévigné had

greatly distinguished himself at the short but successful siege of Aire. He had been named to the king amongst the few who had more than accomplished their duty. This was a great and legitimate satisfaction to Madame de Sévigné. She descended from a warlike race, and her pride at her son's bravery is easily discernible. That he should do his duty, and do it better than others, was the result of her lesson to him; though during all his campaigns her anxiety was great, and she often wonders with alarm how it is possible to escape so often in such hot engagements.

But Madame de Sévigné did not now limit her anxieties to her amiable son and to her less amiable, though much adored, daughter. The 'little marquis'—the hope and pride of the Grignans—occupied her thoughts. She wished to see him grow worthy of the great name he was to represent. She seems to have been doubtful of the care Madame de Grignan was likely to bestow on the education, or rather on the tender age and rearing, of her little son. Madame de Sévigné warmly advises her 'to cultivate his budding intelligence,' and adds, 'I beg you to forgive him all that he may confess with ingenuousness, but never a lie.' These are but few words, but they express a sentiment which in its truth has become trivial, yet we believe they help immensely to an understanding of the character of Madame de Sévigné.

We have said, and we repeat, that she ignored nothing that was good or noble. Is it not touching

to represent her to ourselves as anxious and fearful lest that little child of three years might speak what is not true? It is natural we should think of this for the children at our knees, but it is not so natural that a grandmother, separated by so great a distance, should have that thought, and much less so in the age in which she lived. Children were counted for very little: they must grow out of infancy to acquire any interest for their parents.

Madame de Grignan herself, cold by nature, seems to have been guilty of a good deal of indifference towards her young family, to grow afterwards passionately eager for the fortune and success of the young marquis and the charming Pauline.

At Livry Madame de Sévigné found herself, by her close proximity to Paris, obliged to accept some of the invitations she received, and when she judged by the 'tone' that the desire for her presence was really great, she quitted for some hours the dear solitude of her home. In one of her letters she gives her daughter an account of a dinner at the house of the Marquise d'Uxelles, and says that all was worthy of praise. The company was such as to make it agreeable: it was composed of Monsieur and Madame de Coulanges, Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld, Madame de la Fayette, and others. Madame de Coulanges is always mentioned with praise and affection: it is with pleasure that Madame de Sévigné impresses on her daughter that their little friend, as she calls her, is not

the dupe of the affection of her friends at court, and that if she goes there it is because of the amusement she finds.

We must remember that Madame de Coulanges had been the more particular and intimate friend of Madame Scarron, and she remained in distinguished favour with Madame de Maintenon. Though not yet the real queen, she was already a power, and better heads than the giddy one of Madame de Coulanges might have been turned by the prospects such an intimacy opened. Not so, however, with the Leaf (la Feuille), another of her surnames: she could, like Madame de Sévigné, turn her back on Versailles, and without envy or jealousy enjoy at Livry the intercourse of her cousin and the amusements they shared.

At no time was the court of France more brilliant and magnificent. At no time either did it present a spectacle more calculated to inspire serious reflections in those who could reflect. It was as it were like witnessing the last desperate efforts of one carried away by a strong current. Madame de Montespan, armed with her beauty and sarcastic wit, with the power that habit and years can give, was with all her strength resisting the fate that was to overcome her. One day, intoxicated by her renewed ascendency over her royal lover, she in public leans lovingly her proud head on his shoulders. Still there were those who mistook not the signs of the time, and who felt sure

that a change was nigh. 'Everyone believes that the star of Madame de Montespan is waning,' writes Madame de Sévigné. 'There are tears, an apparent melancholy, affected gaiety, quarrels—in a word, everything must have an end. One looks, observes, and imagines. Rays of light are discovered on faces which a month ago were considered utterly unworthy to be compared with others. The game goes on very gaily, though the *belle* keeps her room. Some tremble, others rejoice, others desire immutability, most wish for a change of scene. We are, according to the most clear sighted, at a crisis worthy of attention.'

With this news came the report that the Friend (Madame de Maintenon) was no longer what she had been. Recalling to remembrance Madame Scarron, whose serious qualities Madame de Sévigné had appreciated, she goes on to say—'We can count on no good head if that one was not capable of supporting unaltered the contact of that strange world.'

Madame de Coulanges, who after a visit of a few days at Livry had left it to return to Versailles, the better to solicit an appointment she desired to obtain for her husband, was there attacked by a malignant fever which very nearly carried her to her grave. In the middle of September, Madame de Sévigné gives the first intimation of it to her daughter. 'The poor Madame de Coulanges,' she says, 'has a strong fever; she felt the first shivers at Versailles: to-morrow is the fourth day.'

A week later, from the house of Madame de Coulanges, she writes a letter full of her grief. She describes the progress of the fever, and exclaims, alluding to the doctors who were attending and, as she believed, bleeding to death Madame de Coulanges :—'Nothing more is necessary than once to see these gentlemen to be determined never to intrust our poor body to them. . . . I have thought twenty times of Molière since I saw all this.' The biting satire of the great poet against the ignorant and pedantic doctors, who were chargeable with the deaths of many in that century, had been present to Madame de Sévigné even before she became, by her vigilant attendance on Madame de Coulanges, the daily witness of their blunders. Writing to Madame de Grignan only a few days before the illness of Madame de Coulanges, she speaks with amused delight of the pointed and truthful caricatures of the 'Malade Imaginaire.'

The presence of Madame de Sévigné was both a relief and a consolation to Monsieur de Coulanges and the sufferer. The jovial little man, unaccustomed to any emotion but that of pleasure and amusement, was overcome with sorrow at the possibility of losing his wife. 'Write to the petit Coulanges,' says the marquise to her daughter; 'he has been worthy of compassion : had he lost his wife he would have lost everything. It was a touching spectacle when she dictated a letter for Monsieur du Gué, recommending Monsieur de Coulanges to him, adding that conscience and

justice forced her to acknowledge she had ruined him, and demanding of Monsieur and Madame du Gué that last proof of their affection for her. I assure you it was a very sad scene. You will then write to that poor little man. He is perfectly satisfied with my friendship. Verily it is on such occasions we must show it.'

Madame de Sévigné could not witness the struggle between life and death of Madame de Coulanges without her mind turning to that great mystery which was to her an object of dread, and yet so constantly present to her imagination. Traces of her meditations are discernible in a few lines, where, alluding to some remedies she was trying to reduce the swelling of her hands, which had never subsided since her rheumatism, she writes :—'I shall try a few little remedies for my hands, purely for your sake, as myself I have not much confidence. It is always in the desire to please you that I take care of myself, being well persuaded that the hour of my death can neither be advanced nor delayed ; but I obey the counsels of human prudence, being convinced that it is the right way to arrive at what is required by Providence.'

These words savour of fatalism, and no doubt it was the bent of Madame de Sévigné's mind. She regarded all things as preordained, and she could practise resignation only because of that conviction. It is strange to us that one so tender-hearted could have found consolation in that severe doctrine. It is true she under-

stood it in no passive way; she explains in the preceding passage what her conviction was—to strive, to labour, to combat, and then, when every effort has been made, to submit and be patient. Grief she could feel, but repining never, with that certitude that no striving of hers could ever have altered or bettered her existence. Such a faith had something in it that was grand and noble; and even those who share it not can but revere it in Madame de Sévigné: through life it was her real courage, and the answer she opposed to every check of Fortune.

In the month of October, 1676, all anxiety respecting Madame de Coulanges being at an end, Madame de Sévigné had the pleasure of receiving her cousin Bussy at Livry. He came, profiting by the rare permissions his incessant adulation and solicitation, joined to the assistance of the Duc de St.-Aignan, obtained for him from the king. During the few days he spent in the country, Bussy hastened to write to Madame de Grignan, knowing it was the best way to please his cousin. Bussy was also greatly attached to his eldest daughter, Madame de Coligny, who was widowed in the first year of her marriage, and who completely devoted herself to her father. She was preferred by him before all his other children, and he justified his partiality for his daughter, and his cousin's preference for Madame de Grignan, by saying that their two daughters being so extraordinary in merit, should be regarded with extraordinary affection. It was too

true; Madame de Sévigné's preference could not be kept a secret; it was exhibited in all her actions, and by flattering it no doubt Bussy made himself agreeable to his cousin.

Bussy in his letter to Madame de Grignan assures her that Madame de Sévigné is all the better for his presence and his good spirits. She profited by them a very short time however, finding herself again in the undisturbed and somewhat melancholy enjoyment of the last days of autumn. She describes these admirably to her daughter :—

'The weather is miraculous; it is those beautiful crystal days of autumn which are no longer warm, and yet not cold. I am charmed with them, and remain out of doors from ten in the morning till five in the afternoon, not losing a moment of them; and at five, with admirable obedience, I retire. It is not without humbling myself, and acknowledging with great displeasure that I am a miserable mortal, that a foolish timidity compels me to shun the fresh dew—my oldest friend, which I accuse, perhaps unjustly, of all my woes—and take refuge in the church, and close my eyes till I am told that there are lights in my room. For at dusk I require complete obscurity, as that of the woods or a church; or else I must have three or four persons to talk with me.'

It is worthy of attention how often the most joyous dispositions are most susceptible to sadness from outward causes. Madame de Sévigné could not resist

certain impressions, and more than once she mentions her dread of being alone in her room when the shadows are falling without. That hour, delightful to many, when one can sit in repose and enjoy a tranquil dreamy moment, was repugnant to her. At such times her imagination had to grapple with the phantoms it evoked: her daughter ill, her daughter ever absent, rose before her, and to avoid such images she sought first the woods, and then, when that was forbidden, it was the solitude of a church.

# CHAPTER XXX.

1676-7.

The Baron de Sévigné arrives at Livry.—Joy of his mother.—Indecision of Madame de Grignan.—She goes to Lambesc instead of visiting Paris.—Disappointment of Madame de Sévigné.—Langlée's present to Madame de Montespan.—His position and fortune.—Singular present of Dangeau to Madame de Montespan.—Arrival of Madame de Grignan.—State of her health.—Charles de Sévigné a sous-lieutenant of the Gendarmes-Dauphins.—Departure of Madame de Grignan.

THE affairs of Madame de Grignan and those of the Baron de Sévigné brought their mother back to Paris earlier than she had intended to come. For Madame de Grignan she had some favours to ask, but for the baron there was more serious business to attend to. While with the army he had had an attack of rheumatism, and he had written to his mother to obtain him leave of absence. It was no easy task, as Madame de Sévigné well knew, and the necessity of seeing Colbert in the interest of her daughter, and Louvois in that of her son, was far from agreeable. Before, however, she could obtain the wished-for permission, the baron, regardless of the consequences, arrived at Livry, not daring to show himself at Paris. Madame de Sévigné

went into the country to receive him, and it by chance happened that they met at the end of the avenue. 'We entered, we embraced each other, we talked of twenty things in the same breath, we questioned each other, never waiting for an answer. In a word, that interview partook of all the joy and confusion with which such meetings are generally accompanied.'

It was always with strong expressions of delight that Madame de Sévigné met her son. His warm and affectionate disposition corresponded exactly with hers, and we imagine that unconsciously, if she wept more when she left Madame de Grignan, her joy for the moment was purer when she received her son; no clouds ever darkened the first hour of their reunion. Everything was spontaneous with Madame de Sévigné when meeting her son, and when meeting Madame de Grignan everything was calculated. Ever fearing to displease or hurt her daughter, from the moment she clasped her in her arms, Madame de Sévigné must have experienced some diffidence, some fear, which could not give to such meetings the open joyousness of those with her son. Entering into all the wishes and desires of his mother, the amiable baron hastened to add his solicitations to hers, and in a few lines, the most affectionate and gay, he pressed Madame de Grignan to hasten her arrival.

The question was, whether, for her mother's sake, the comtesse in Provence would consent to allow Mon-

sieur de Grignan to go alone to Lambesc for the Etats, and herself precede him to Paris by two or three months. Madame de Sévigné desired it ardently, and she answered the objections of her daughter with some pain. Madame de Grignan saw nothing but obstacles, and reasons for remaining. Madame de Sévigné thought otherwise. 'I continue to implore you, my beloved, to decide in my favour, and to waver no longer to undertake a journey you have promised me, and which in truth you owe me a little. I am not the only one to observe that you bargain a good deal to please me. Start, then, my daughter; start.'

On that occasion Madame de Grignan was justified in delaying her journey for a month or two. The task devolving on the lieutenant-governor at the Etats was a difficult and disagreeable one. The demands of the king were exorbitant, and he who presented them could not but find himself regarded as responsible for what in truth he was entirely innocent. The presence of a woman like the Comtesse de Grignan, young, clever, and beautiful, would be a powerful auxiliary to her husband. Madame de Sévigné is most unwillingly forced to say—'You are reasonable; you love me, you see better than I can what you may do, and what is in your way. You are at full liberty to decide.'

Madame de Grignan, her mother tells us in her letters, was long in taking a resolution; and no doubt at that moment she hesitated, drawn as she was on one

side by the warm entreaties of her mother, on the other by the affection she bore Monsieur de Grignan and what she believed to be her duty to him. 'It is a great truth, my daughter, that indecision robs us of our liberty. If you were compelled you would have taken a resolution.'

Her resolution was taken, however, but it was not such as Madame de Sévigné desired. While with her son and the Chevalier de Grignan she was discoursing on the probable arrival of her daughter, she received a letter informing her that Madame de Grignan had started for Lambesc, and Madame de Sévigné, who on the 11th of November was thinking only of going to Paris to receive her daughter, writes on the 13th—'And so, my daughter, you are at Lambesc, and at the time I was still hoping for your presence, you were going towards the Durance. One had needs be possessed of as much reason as you have to submit to this disappointment, and I own to you, that whatever you may think my feelings are on this occasion, you cannot represent them with truth.'

In spite of her grief, Madame de Sévigné was too just not to admit the force of Madame de Grignan's reasons:—'You will be very useful to Monsieur de Grignan, and I am compelled to own that nothing is wiser or more dignified than your conduct.'

The interval Madame de Sévigné had still to wait before seeing her daughter was shortened by the presence of her son. She remained with him at Livry,

and he wrote to his sister that their mother rather wished him to be worse than he was, that she might repay him for the care he had taken of her during her illness. 'I do all I can,' says he, 'to console my mother for the bad weather, and for having left Paris; but she will not listen to me when I talk of this. She is always reverting to the care I took of her during her illness, and as far as I can judge from what she says, she is extremely sorry that my rheumatism is not in every limb and accompanied by fever, that she might be able to prove to me the extent of her affection and gratitude.'

Madame de Sévigné, though keeping her son company during those winter days, was constantly visiting Paris. Madame de Coulanges was occupying Madame de Grignan's room in the house of Madame de Sévigné, to forget the room in which, she jokingly said, she had 'died.' From her Madame de Sévigné heard the news of the court, for which she was always curious, and for which Madame de Grignan had an equal relish. Madame de Montespan is still the person on whom all eyes are turned. 'Langlée,' says Madame de Sévigné, 'has given to Madame de Montespan a dress of *gold*, embroidered with *gold*, trimmed with *gold*, over it worked *gold*, mixed with *gold*, blended to a certain other *gold*. It makes the most divine stuff that was ever imagined. It is the fairies who did this work in secret; no human being knew of it. It was determined to offer it as mysteriously as it had

been manufactured. Madame de Montespan's tailor brought her a dress she had ordered, having made it to an absurd measure. Directly she tried it on she exclaims with such cries and reproaches as you can imagine. The tailor, trembling, says to her, "Madame, as the time is short, will you see if the dress I have here would not satisfy you in default of the other?" He shows it. "Ah, the beautiful thing! what material! comes it from heaven? there are no such on earth." The king arrives. The tailor says, "Madame, it is for you." They understand it is a piece of gallantry; but who can have made the present? "It is Langlée," says the king. "It is Langlée assuredly," answers Madame de Montespan; "nobody but him can have imagined such magnificence." "It is Langlée, it is Langlée," is repeated by everybody. "It is Langlée," even the echoes own it; and I, my daughter, to be in fashion, I repeat it is Langlée.'

This little episode is so characteristic of the time that we have thought it well to give it in full, but a few words of explanation of the giver, of Langlée, are necessary. The son of a bed-chamber woman of the queen dowager, of no family, he had been by his mother early introduced to court. There he attached himself particularly to MONSIEUR. He was a man of perfect taste, and soon became an authority on questions of dress, jewelry, and furniture. His forte, however, was the gaming-table. Of consummate skill, and without being ever suspected of the slightest dis-

honesty, he acquired an immense fortune by his gains. He shared the heavy play with the king, and stood extremely well with Madame de Montespan. Without being particularly distinguished by the king, he was admitted into all the pleasures and amusements of the court. Obliging, ready to lend, not in a hurry for repayment, he was generally liked, and his advice constantly sought. Later in life his intimacy extended to the king's daughter, and to the last he always maintained his singular position. In reading St.-Simon one is struck by the number of adventurers, if we may so term them, who made their way in a court so proud and exclusive. It is amusing to see the well-bred contempt with which St.-Simon renders justice to the qualities of such people, appearing all the while astonished that they should ever have breathed the same air as himself.

Madame de Montespan, to return to her, was still thought to be in favour, otherwise she would not have received such presents, for the example of Langlée was followed a few days after by Dangeau, who was his exact counterpart, having been introduced to court in much the same way, equally fortunate at cards, and equally esteemed for fair play. Obliging, and considered by the king and Madame de Montespan, he had, to please the haughty marquise, taken it into his head to form a menagery at Clagny, the house the king had given her. 'He has collected, at a cost of more than two thousand écus, the most tender turtle-

doves, the fattest cows, the most curly sheep, the ducks of ducks, and yesterday this fine assemblage was passed in review.'

This present seems strange indeed to us, and it is probable that the *belle* preferred the dress of gold, the gift of Langlée.

One of the reasons which called Madame de Sévigné from Livry was her desire to obtain the payment of the pension granted to Monsieur de Grignan. She went, not to Versailles, but to St.-Germain, where she was coldly received by Colbert. We know she detested him for the part he had taken at the time of Fouquet's trial, and his only answer to her application, well arranged as she says it was, was—'I shall see about it, madame,' and accompanied her to the door. After that, to console herself, Madame de Sévigné goes to dine with her kind friend Pomponne.

Her disappointment, however, was of short duration, as together with the news that her daughter would soon be with her, came the assurance that would end her son's exile and uncertainty. To return to Paris with her son, and there to receive her daughter was indeed all that Madame de Sévigné could desire. The last letters addressed to Madame de Grignan, and which met her at the different towns where she stopped, are expressive of the keenest delight. It is as a sudden change of rhythm, and reading those letters after the lapse of years, there is all the unexpected and happy effects musicians draw from such transitions.

We have been tormented, anxious, eager with Madame de Sévigné, and with her also we throw aside all such feelings only to be glad.

Happy days were those of expectation to Madame de Sévigné, the happiest of all we believe, for the much-desired presence of Madame de Grignan always brought with it sufferings of another kind, and particularly were they very great during that stay of a little over five months she was going to make with her mother.

Madame de Grignan seems to have been both cold and jealous, for when Madame de Sévigné expresses too warmly her desire to see her daughter, she is blamed by her; and when she gives way to the good or bad reasons of Madame de Grignan, she is accused of indifference.

As Madame de Grignan started from Lambesc, on her way to Paris, her mother's thoughts flew to her in affection and gratitude: the journey was regarded by one so over-fond as a meritorious act: Madame de Grignan was thanked in glowing terms for thus setting out in the depth of winter. 'What do I not owe to you, my child, for so much trouble, fatigue, annoyance, cold, frosts, and sleepless nights? I feel as if I had suffered all those inconveniences myself; my thoughts have not been one moment separated from you, and I have found a hundred times that I am not worthy of the extreme trouble you are taking for me; that is on a certain side, for that of tenderness and affection

must give me great merit in your eyes. What a journey! and in what a season! You will arrive precisely on the shortest day in the year, and consequently you will bring us back the sun. I have seen a motto which would be very appropriate to me. It is a tree, leafless and without life, and around it these words—Fin che sol ritorni [Till the sun returns]. What say you of it, my daughter?'

The meeting so eagerly looked forward to, on one side at least, took place on the 22nd December, 1676, at Villeneuve St.-Georges, where Madame de Sévigné went to meet her daughter. Madame de Grignan arrived exhausted by the fatigues of her journey of twenty days, and so altered, so delicate in appearance, that Madame de Sévigné hardly knew her. Such a sight threw a gloom over the very first hour of their meeting, and the anxious solicitude of Madame de Sévigné rendered the stay of Madame de Grignan a continual alternation of painful differences.

Bussy was in Paris on the arrival of the Belle Madelonne, as with the privilege of age and relationship, he, like Madame de Sévigné, termed Madame de Grignan. He remained in Paris till March of the following year, but his occupations prevented his seeing much of his cousin, and starting for Burgundy he writes to Madame de Sévigné, that at least he will now enjoy her correspondence.

We know little of the early months of 1677; they were spent in Paris by mother and daughter. Mon-

sieur de Grignan had joined them there ; but in spite of such a happy reunion, letters written after the separation in June bear traces of how little satisfactory to either were those moments so eagerly desired and so impatiently anticipated.

One happy event occurred for Madame de Sévigné ; her son did at last succeed in ridding himself of his post, so obnoxious to him. He bought of La Fare the appointment of sous-lieutenant of the Gendarmes-Dauphins, and thus found himself at the head of the company. The dauphin was becoming every day a more important personage in the state, and this advancement, though rather dearly purchased, was looked upon with great satisfaction by the marquise.

The visit of Madame de Grignan was cut short by the very tenderness of her mother : for the sake of both a separation was judged essential, and on the 8th of June, 1677, Monsieur and Madame de Grignan left Paris.

To the grief of separating from her daughter was this time added the keenest anxieties about her health. What such days were to Madame de Sévigné she has described already in the most vivid terms. On the morning she bade adieu to her dear children, she turned for consolation to Madame de la Troche, who, attached as she was to the marquise, did her best to console her, and regarded it as a painful privilege to be the chosen confidante of her woe.

Leaving them together, and for the moment allow-

ing Madame de Grignan to travel unheeded to Provence, we will in a few words bring to mind the great public events which happened during those years we have been almost exclusively occupied with Madame de Sévigné.

END OF VOL. I.

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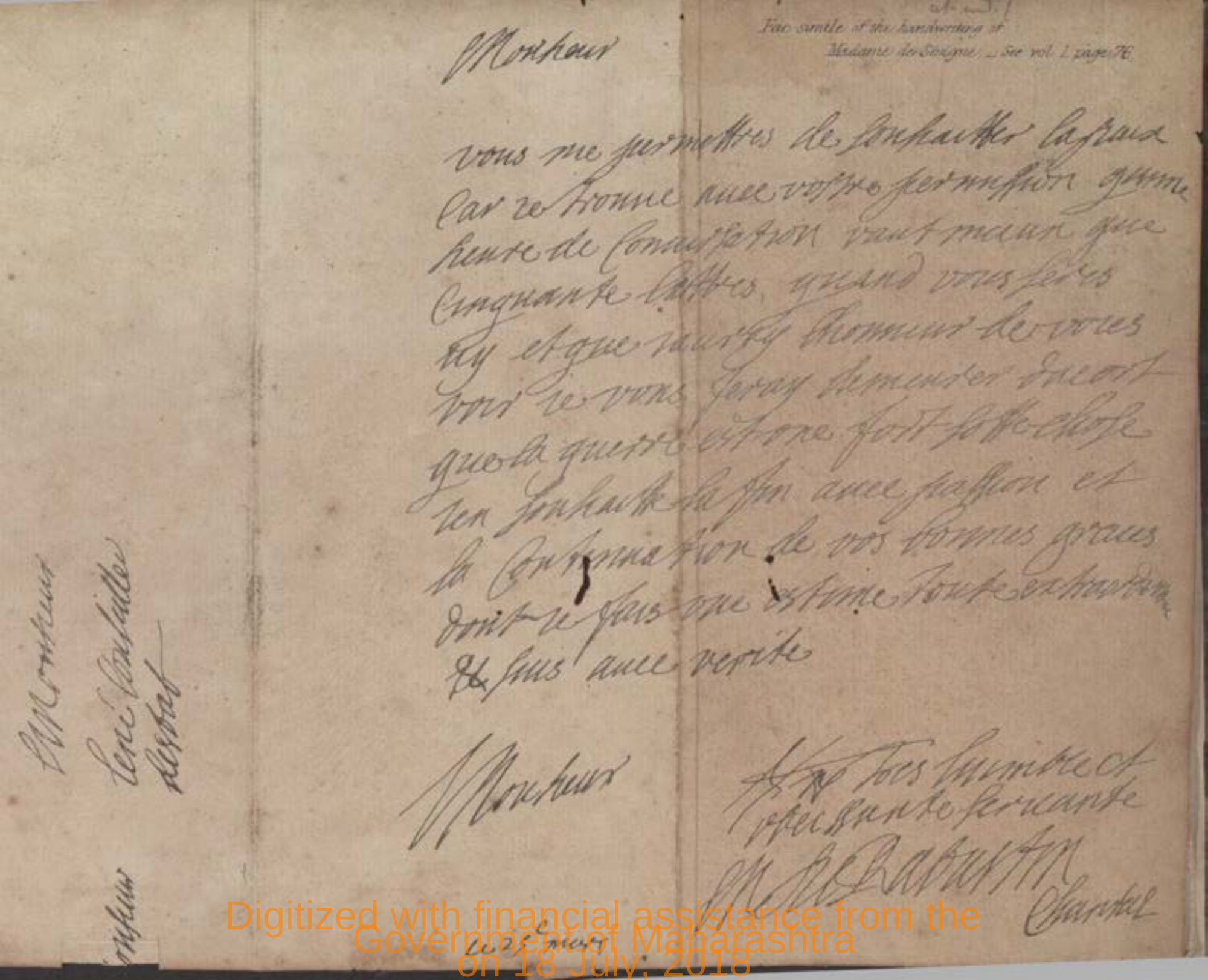
at end 1

*Fac-simile of the handwriting of*
*Madame de Sévigné. — See vol. 1. page 76*

[illegible] de Bonhaller la peau
avec votre permission gemme
[illegible]sation vaut mieux que
[illegible]ffres, quand vous serés
[illegible]arby Thonneur de vous
[illegible] Jeray demander decert
[illegible]estone fort jolie chose
[illegible]ssin avec passion et
[illegible]ion de vos bonnes graces
[illegible]one estime toute entiere
verité

Vos tres humble et
obeissante servante
M de Rabutin
Chantal



Fac simile of the handwriting of
Madame de Sevigne. See vol. I page 76.

Monsieur

vous me permettez de souhaiter la paix
car je trouve avec votre permission qu'une
heure de conversation vaut mieux que
cinquante lettres, quand vous serez
roy et que nous serons derrieres de vos
vers je vous serai demander encore
que la guerre est trop sotte chose
et je souhaite la fin avec passion et
la Continuation de vos bontés avec
droit je suis avec je trouve toute entiere
et sans aucune reserve

Monsieur

Les Tres humble et
respectueuse servante
M de Rabutin
Chantal

Comte Coulteux
Dijon

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on 18 July, 2018